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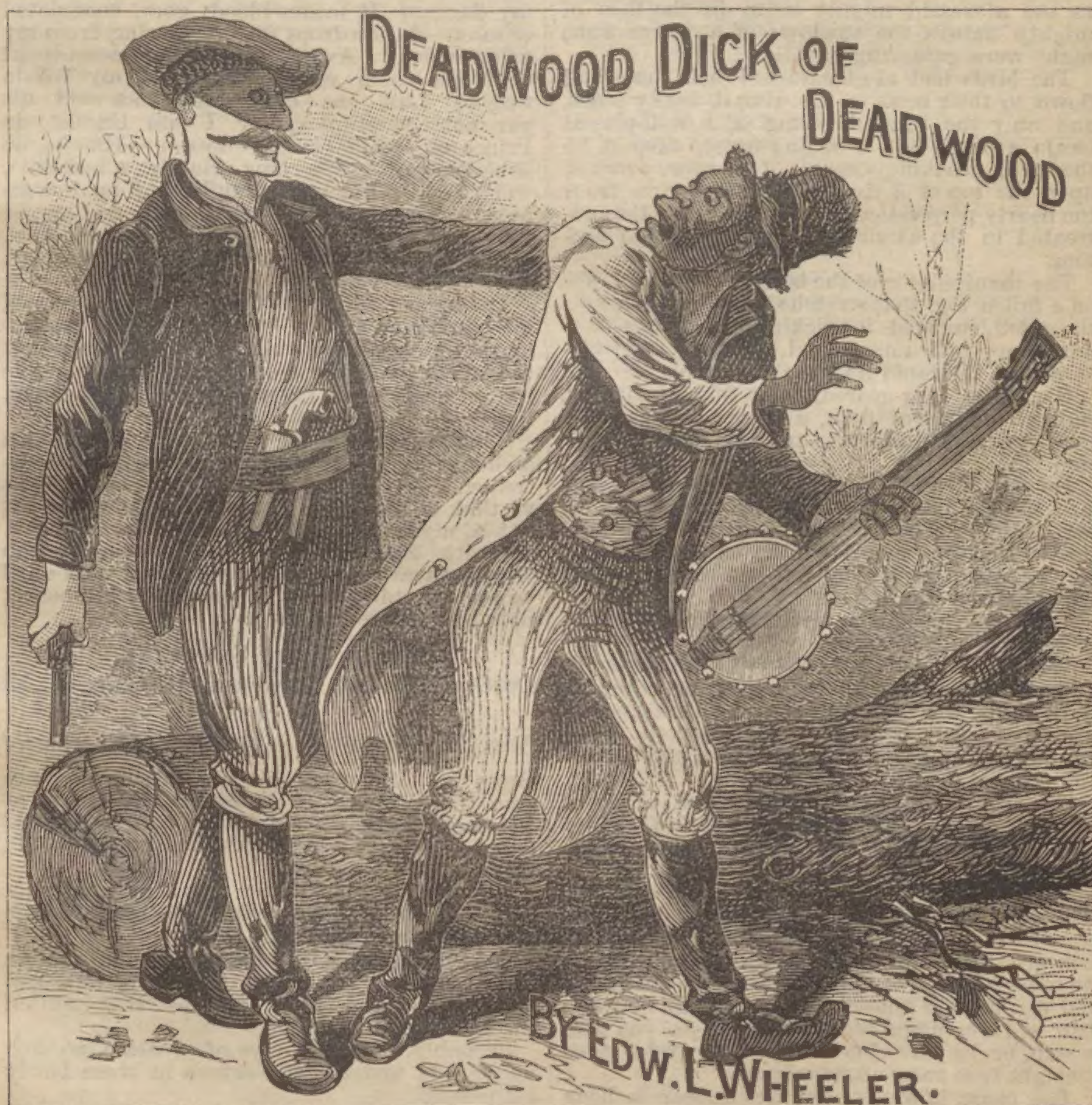
Vol. XI.

\$2.50
a Year.

Published Weekly by Beadle and Adams,
No. 98 WILLIAM ST., NEW YORK.

Price,
Five Cents.

No. 135.



"OH! SPARE ME—LUFF DIS YAR CHILE GO FREE, MISTER ROAD-AGENT, FOR I'SE INNOCENT AS DE
LITTLE LAMB W'OT DE GOOD BOOK TELLS YE ABOUT."

Deadwood Dick of Deadwood;

OR,

THE PICKED PARTY.

BY EDWARD L. WHEELER,

AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK" NOVELS,
"ROSEBUD ROB" NOVELS, ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE NEW HAMLET.

"Oh! bress dis yar nigger, if he ebber go east,
An' leab dis land ob de Caanan,
Fo' hyeer in de mountings am a mighty big feast,
To the lubber of Hamlet with de brain on."

THE sun was just kissing the mountain-tops that frowned down upon Billy-Goat Gulch, and in the aforesaid mighty seam in the face of mighty nature, the shadows of a warm June night were gathering rapidly.

The birds had mostly hushed their songs and flown to their nests in the dismal, lonely pines, and only the tuneful twang of a well-played banjo aroused the brooding quiet, save it be the shrill, croaking screams of a crow, perched upon the top of a dead pine, which rose from the nearly perpendicular mountain-side that retreated in the ascending from the gulch bottom.

The manipulator of the banjo was seated upon a fallen log, that stretched its length across the gulch, engaged in picking the strings of a handsome instrument, and evidently not concerned at the rapid approach of night.

He was a long-geared, bony fellow, with no superabundance of flesh, and as black as coal, with eyes and lips of the most African persuasion.

He was attired in ragged boots of a large size, striped diagonal pantaloons that fitted his legs tightly; a calico shirt; greasy white linen duster that was split down the back, and a battered apology for a plug hat, set back upon his curly-haired cranium.

Taken as a whole, he was a marvel of oddity in personal appearance.

What he was doing in the wild fastnesses of Billy-Goat Gulch, with its volume of recorded dark deeds, was not at present apparent, as he appeared solely bent on eliciting melody from his banjo, and keeping an eye upon the croaking crow in the distant tree-top.

The aforesaid crow was evidently a center of annoyance, for the colored musician finally stopped playing and shook his fist at the offending bird.

"Now, jes' you look yar, you black son-of-a-sea-cook," he cried, angrily, "off ye don't cry up yer chin-music, dis yar chile will adjourn de concert *sine die*, for suah. Dar's no kind ob use ob musical genyess appealin' to brute instink, I tell yer, an' I'se got er softer snap than concert-izin' wid a common black crow. So jes' you take a skip, or dis yere chile's a-goin' ter fro' a stone straight froo yous, an no mistake."

The crow, however, did not appear to hear or understand the address of his sable companion below—or if he did, made no move.

"Oh! yer ain't goin', is ye?" the banjoist growled. "Well, bress me if you ain't as cheeky as dat feminine fury, Nance Yuba. 'Spect I wouldn't like to be in de cunnel's place, nohow. Why, bress dis nigger if de ole gal don't baste it to the cunnel fer keeps. Better luff me alone, dough, or I'll paralyze her, will dis chile. I'se a bad hair-pin, an' I carries a razor in my boot-leg. Yas, an' I'se Hamlet, too—de cullud impersonification ob Shakespeare's hero, I is. 'Spect dese yere solitary solitudes be a fine place for unappreciated genius to rehearse, before sailin' forth on de tide ob public condemnation. Ah! but won't dis yar chile paralyze 'em, dough! Jes' wait till Edwin Booth Snowbank, de cullud trag'diam, debut-tah on de metreopolitan stage as Hamlet, de solemncholly Dame! Aha! To be, or not to be! dat's de question before dis yar court. To be, ob course! Fool! see ye not de stain ob my dagger? It means blood! gore! coagulated crimson—de dewdrops ob life flowing from my noble veins. Avast, you son-of-a-sea-cook! Guff me room wharin to wield my Toledo razzor! Luff me carve my foes wid dis yar noble toothpick, for I am Hamlet, de Prince ob Denmark an' Sebben-up—Hamlet, de noblest ob all de Siberians—Hamlet, a bad chile, wid a temper like unto a bufler bull on de war-path! Cl'ar de track, you Danish traitors, or dis yar chile will ki-yarve you wid his stilletter, wid which he's drawn de human gore ob seven thousand noble humans!"

The irrepressible son of Ethiopia had dropped his banjo and drawn from his boot-leg an immense butcher-knife which he waved tragically to and fro, as he struck an attitude more notable for its grace than his would-be Shakespearean lingo.

"Dar!" he cried, with a defiant nod to his audience in the tree-top, as he resheathed the tremendous butcher-knife in his boot-leg. "W'at ye t'ink ob dat, eh? Guess dat settles de fact dat a nigger has got genyess, ef he ar' black, don't it? 'Spect de cullud race is bound to leab de white trash in de shade, yet. Jes' wait until ye see dis chile pasted up on ebbery bill-board, in letters as big as a barn:

EDWIN BOOTH SNOWBANK,

De Great Cullud Tragedian—De King of All
Hamlets!

Now Performin' at de Grand Opera House!

Bress yer life! won't dis nig pile on de slugs dem times! Dine at de Astor House, sup at Delmonico's, an' wine at ebbery calf in de city? Oh-ah! go away wid ye, common 'coons! Don't know ye!

And with a chuckle, the negro reseated himself upon the log, and took up the banjo, which responded tunefully to his touch.

A man appeared at the edge of a small growth of chaparral in the rear of the negro, and stood listening to the lively strains that wafted through the lonely gulch.

Probably, since the days of creation, no such music had aroused the echoes in these lonely fastnesses.

"'Spect I'd better move on," the darky soliloquized, as he continued to agitate the banjo.

"De Siberian shades ob Ethiopia am enwellopin' dis yar universe in a mantle ob eclipse, an' dey say it ain't healthy for unprotected Hambletonian voyagers in dese lonely abscesses ob nature. Wonder how fur it am to Skeleton Bend?—dat's de objective p'int de cunnel advised dis nigger to storm. Guess mebbe dar won't be much ob a house for Hamlet hyar, to-night, an' so dis solemncholly Dane must necessarily perigrinate henceforward in quest of graft. Wonder what's become ob de cunnel? Las' dis chile see'd ob him he was a-skinning out ob Sand City, wid old Nance Yuba arter him, wid de cowhide in her grasp. Wonderful how de ole gal pursues him. 'Spect she'll cotch de cunnel, sometime, bymeby—golly! den ye'll see de fur fly! Guess I'll walk."

And, rising from his seat on the log, the colored tragedian shouldered his banjo, and was about to set out on his journey down the gulch, when he was restrained from so doing, by the heavy gripe of a hand upon his shoulder.

With a yell of terror the darky turned to find himself in the presence of a man—a stranger, too, a cocked revolver in whose right hand was leveled at the son of the South.

This stranger was of medium hight, but rather heavy built, and clad in a sportish outfit, consisting of corduroy pants, vest and coat, white flannel shirt open at the throat, slouch hat, and top boots, with a belt around his waist stuck full of weapons. His face was masked, and the black mustache that adorned his upper lip was of tremendous size and the ends waxed to a point.

A coarse laugh escaped from his lips, as he noted the undisguised terror of the darky.

For Snowbank was alarmed, beyond peradventure. He trembled from top to toe, and his eyes rolled in their sockets in a most comical manner.

"Oh! de good Lord bress dis chile, soul an' body!" he ejaculated. "Oh! spare me—luff dis yar chile go free, Mister Road-agent, for I'se innocent as de little lamb w'ot de good book tells ye about."

"Shut up, you fool," the stranger replied, sternly. "Keep your port-hole closed till you're told to speak, if you don't want swim Jordan without notice. What are you doing in this wild spot, you infernal coon?"

"Oh! beg parding, sah! I'se bound for de settlement ob Skeleton Bend. 'Spects I better be goin', too, if you's no objections."

"But I have, so don't be in a hurry. What are you going to Skeleton Bend for?"

"To meet de cunnel, sah."

"The cunnel. Who in thunder's he?"

"Why de cunnel is de cunnel, on course. Cunnel Yankee Doodle Yuba."

"Ha! ha! Colonel Yankee Doodle Yuba, eh? Fine handle, that, I'm cussed ef it ain't. Whar is this Yuba from?"

"Yuba Dam, sah!"

"What! you infernal black rascal?"

"Yuba Dam, sah!"

"Curse me, if I don't like your impudence, you black-and-tan; but, thet little game won't work with me. Come down, now, and tell me whar this Yankee Doodle Yuba comes from, or I'll put a bead through your eye."

"Zactly, sah. I done jes' told you, sah, suah's dis chile is a modern Hamlet—de cunnel is Cunnel Yankee Doodle Yuba, from Yuba Dam, Yuba township, State ob California, an' dis yar nigger is ready to sw'ar to dem yar facts, by de p'int ob dis little Toledo blade—dis yar infantum razzor!"

And out from his boot-leg the tragedian drew the tremendous butcher-knife, and flourished it promiscuously.

"Oh! I see the p'int now," the road-agent said, facetiously. "Yuba, from Yuba Dam—yes, yes, I see. Ha! ha! ha! By the way, coony, just dispense with that toy you have there by returning it to your boot-leg. The magnetic influence of the blade might draw the bullet from my gun, and there'd be a dead nigger about your size, here."

Snowbank instantly obeyed.

"Now, then, what are you to this Yankee Doodle Yuba?" the road-agent demanded.

"Oh! bress you, I'se nuffin' to him—no relation, at ali. I'se simply his body-servant—his national guard, you see. Why, lordy, chile, I'se no common nigger, you better believe. I'se Edwin Booth Snowbank, de cullud tragedian, frum Fifth Avenue, New York, whar I'se bin paralyzin' de denizens with 'Hamlet.' Suah, sah, dey say I'se de comin' Shakespearean promulgator ob de period, fo' a fac', an' it was by de skin ob my teeth dat dis yar chile escaped de public demand fo' his 'Hamlet,' an' cum West on a Pullman hand-car, to recooperate an' rehearse, an' at de same time accept a position ob trust wid de cunnel."

"Well, there's one thing certain," the road-agent said, gruffly.

"Zactly, sah—dere's a heap ob certainties about dis yar cullud pillar ob Shakespeare. But w'ot certain thing did you have refrance to, most amiable duke?"

"The certain thing is that you are a brainless idiot, or a lunatic!" the road-agent replied, with a chuckle. "The best thing you can do is to go start a graveyard, by planting yourself."

"Gw'off!" Snowbank cried, indignantly. "You's de wustest pusson I ebber see, 'pon my honor. You'se got 'bout as much 'preciation fo' de fine arts as a mule. Go 'long, now, an' don't trouble dis distinguished Shakespearean scholar no more, or I ki'yarve you wid my razzor."

"Undoubtedly, if you get a chance. You say you are going to Skeleton Bend?"

"Dat's my projective p'int, sah!"

"And you say you are going to meet this man, Yuba, there?"

"'Spect I is."

"What takes you to Skeleton Bend?"

"Bress you, chile, he's goin' to start a church an' preach to de sinners ober dar."

"Well, I'm cussed ef he won't hev worthy subjects fer converts," the road-agent said, with a hoarse laugh. "But, ta-ta, nigger! I haven't got time to entertain you longer, but will see you later. Am goin' over on the Cat-Gut to hang a pilgrim, yet, to-night, an' must be joggin'. Ef any one asks after the health o' Cap Cutthroat, over at the Bend, give them my respects, an' tell 'em I'm well. Tra! la! la! now; skip the gutter!"

Then, with a wild laugh his road-agency turned and strode away up the gulch.

E. B. Snowbank gazed after him a second, in sublime disgust; then, turning, he made tracks in the opposite direction, as rapidly as the length and strength of his pedal extremities would permit.

Two miles down Billy-Goat Gulch, from where Snowbank encountered Cutthroat, lay the town or mining camp of some notoriety, called Skeleton Bend.

About a mile above where the above meeting had occurred, or in all about three miles up Billy-Goat Gulch, from the Bend, a deep, narrow ravine struck off through the depths of the mountains.

It was a dark, lonesome place, even in daytime, but at night there were few men, familiar with the surrounding country, who could have been hired to penetrate the dark recesses and follow the ravine to its inter-mountain end.

This place had been christened the Cat-Gut, because once upon a time a vagabond miner with a passion for scraping the bow, had entered the uninviting place on a prospecting tour, and had never been known to return. Hence the name.

After leaving the darky, Captain Cutthroat strode rapidly through Billy-Goat Gulch, until he came to the Cat-Gut, into which narrow seam he turned and hurried on.

For perhaps the distance of two miles Cutthroat followed the gulch, at last arriving at a little camp, where was a small tent, and a blazing fire.

A couple of men were seated beside the fire, engaged in smoking their evening pipes—roughly dressed, long-bearded pilgrims, with faces masked like Cutthroat's.

They nodded to him, as he paused before the camp-fire, and continued to puff at their pipes, without speaking.

"Well," Cutthroat growled, after several minutes of silence. "What's the word? Have the boys returned from the Bend?"

"No, Cap. Guess not—leasthow, they ain't show'd up in camp," the stouter of the twain replied. "'Spect mabbe theyve found a bottle of whisky somewhere along the route, and stopped to pay their respects."

"Curse them, they'd better attend to my business first! Ah! hoof-strokes. Here they come, now."

He was not wrong.

The footfalls of several horses sounded at no great distance, and were evidently approaching, coming down the gulch.

In the course of ten minutes four masked armed horsemen rode in upon the scene, accompanied by a fifth party, also mounted, but bound upon his horse.

A young man he was, of some two or three and twenty years, attired in the rough garb of the mountain miner—an effeminate fellow in appearance, with his beardless face and fine-cut features, who looked as if he were better fitted for a parlor than the mines.

A gleam of exultation shot from Captain Cutthroat's eye, as he beheld him.

CHAPTER II.

A RUFFIAN AT HOME—NEW "PILGRIMS" AT SKELETON BEND.

"Ho! ho! so it's you, is it?" the outlaw chief cried, striding nearer, and surveying the captured miner with a malicious showing of his teeth.

"Yes, it's me," was the prompt response, "but I am at a loss, sir, to account for my seizure and bringing to this wild spot. I cannot understand it!"

"Oh! you can't! Well, I shall hev to enlighten you, I see. S'pose you know who I am?"

"No more, sir, than that your brutal companions here gave me to understand that when I saw some such a pilgrim as you it would be Cap Cutthroat, the outlaw," the miner answered, undauntedly.

"Humph! yes I'm Cutthroat," the ruffian replied,—"*Calvin Cutthroat*, the leader of these fine specimens of humanity, known as the *Picked Party*. Cuss it, you don't betray much emotion at the fact."

"I am not in the habit of getting frightened at scarecrows," was the retort. "So, say what you have to say, mister road-robber, and let me return to the Bend."

"Oh! no, Mr. Fred Flash—that ain't my game at all. I shouldn't hev hed the boys invite you to the hospitalities of our camp ef I was to let ye go back. No, no, my gay young head of a family, you're booked for a season here, to do tight-rope performances, and you have got ter hang ter yer contract."

"Again I fail to comprehend your meaning. Surely you do not wish to imply that it is your intention to do me harm?"

"Reckon them's my precise calculations, Fred Flash, ef this old coon knows herself, an' I ruther think she do," was the gruff assurance. "Oh! ye needn't be surprised, fer thet's an old story to the *Picked Party*. Many's the pilgrim w'ot's bin took by surprise, heer in the Cat-Gut, an' tramped away to glory. Yas, we've tuk a notion inter our heads, Flash, that you will make a fine subject for a lynch pic-nic—a sort of neck-tie party, and so I had the boys draft you. You, of course, may have some objections, but we propose to overrule them. There's a heap of influence, you know, in a piece of hemp."

The miner, though not of a cowardly make, turned pale—more from indignation than actual alarm, although he well knew that Cutthroat and his gang had no enviable reputation.

Through the mining country around Skeleton Bend, they had spread a reign of terror by their bold crimes and fearless depredations, until a price had been set upon their heads, which amounted to no small fortune.

A brave miner and citizen was Fred Flash, and although young in years, he was gifted with a keen business tact and was one of the first and most popular citizens at the Bend.

And one of the most surprising things that had troubled him was this startling move on the part of Cap Cutthroat.

"In the name of Heaven, man, what have I ever done, that should cause this enmity on your part, toward me?" the miner cried, indignantly. "I have never harmed you nor your men, and I

do not see what reason you have for wishing to hang me."

"Oh! I dare say not. There's a good many things in this world that a person can't see. But I can easily set your mind at rest on this particular score. You see in the natural course of human events, there are a class of men who prosper, and, again, another class who do not prosper. You, by some providential chance, are one of the prosperous mortals. You own the Clipper lode over at the Bend, which, when not half developed, is worth its millions. You own that mine, and have refused fifty princely offers for it. Yet I, for one, have sworn to possess it, and also your wife Fanny Flash. She is just to my liking, and I'm going to marry her and manage the mine, after I've started you off on your last pilgrimage."

"Villain—ruffian!" Fred Flash gasped in genuine horror. "Surely the Lord will not let you proceed in your brutal purpose."

"He won't, eh? Waal, now, don't you fool yourself! Mebbe I know about that better nor you do. Guess the old gent won't stick his jaw in my pie. Anyhow, et won't come to no good, fer you aire either agoin' to cum to terms, or aire goin' to hang, one or t'other. Then, after you've been disposed of, I'll go an' take possession of the widder."

"Ah! will you?" Fred Flash returned with a quiet smile. "I rather predict stormy weather before you accomplish that pretty little undertaking. When you take Fanny Flash for a fool you've reckoned wrongly."

"Oh! ye can't tell me nuthin' about her," Cutthroat cried sneeringly. "I know the little woman like a book, an' she knows me—tharfore we know each other, ye see. It's all a put-up job between us about giving you this golden opportunity. She's as deep in the plot as I am; anyhow, she wants to link her fate with mine, and proposed the hempen necktie as the remedial agent. Only so that you are out of the way and she can marry me—that will suit the Flashing Fanny to a capital T. Of course you cannot have been blind to the fact that the artless Fanny was a widder when you entered into a matrimonial alliance with her. She married Tim Trevelyn, of the Bend, an' arter Tim woke up one mornin' a corpuss, they called Miss Fanny the Widder. No one ever suspected that Trevelyn did not die of the heart disease, as was reported, but you, possibly, may imagine that there was considerable steel in the disease, or else a bit of dog-button. Ha! ha!"

Fred Flash grew a shade paler, as he listened.

"You lie, you ruffian," he cried, sternly. "Your efforts to instill poison into my mind are unavailing. Fanny Flash, of Skeleton Bend, is my wife, and has ever been faithful to me. All you might say in contradiction, would never change my opinion. As to your marrying her, I have no fears whatever, for she would scorn to wipe her feet on you, and, moreover, she is perfectly able to take care of herself. As to getting possession of the mine, you will find it more of an undertaking than you imagine. That is all I have to say. If you have determined to hang me, it is in your power so to do, as I am your prisoner, and unable to defend myself."

"Ha! ha! how closely a person can arrive at the truth of a thing when he's forced to," Cutthroat chuckled, maliciously. "But, hold up, my dear Flash. Don't consign yourself to eternity until you hear the terms I have to propose. First, however, it may be advisable to be on the safe side. Boys, lead his horse beneath the outstretching limb of yonder pine, and fasten a necktie about our friend's windpipe, and also up to the limb, so that he will have no show for escape."

The order was executed without delay, and then Cutthroat continued:

"Now, my dear Flash, I'll tell you what liberal terms I have to propose—just because, you know, I have regarded you as an honest and upright man. Either you must sign over to me the sole right and title to the Clipper Mine, and promise to at once and forever quit this part of the country, leaving ma'm'selle Fanny behind you, or you must—*hang!* Take your choice; you have five minutes to decide in, sir."

And the chief drew forth his watch and noted the hour and minute.

"Stop! you can put up your watch!" Fred Flash cried. "I had decided long ere you concluded your munificent offer!"

"Ah! you will accept, then?"

"No! a thousand times no! Were I so great a coward and villain as to yield to that proposal, I hope God might strike away my life on the instant, and save you the trouble. Fool! ruffian! brute! take advantage of the power you hold over me, and hang me, if you choose, for no earthly persuasion—no earthly torture, could ever change my decision!"

"Then, curse you, you shall have the full benefit, of the fate you have consigned yourself to!" Cutthroat cried, savagely. "We'll see which is the easiest route to leave the country by, the public highway or the elevated system. Boys, unbind him from the saddle, and when I say the word, lead the horse away!"

The ready hands of two of the Picked Party executed the order; a third masked member seized the horse that had borne young Flash to the Cat-Gut by the bits, ready to do the chief's bidding.

"One!" Cutthroat cried, with a horrible leer. "Say yer prayers as yer go up, friend Flash. Haven't time to do it now. Two—here you go, now. Three!"

The instant the word "three" was uttered, the road-agent led the horse from under the doomed miner, and he dropped—into air, the rope about his neck preventing his touching the ground.

A few struggles, and all was over.

Lifeless the body swung to and fro, beneath the lynching tree of the Picked Party.

And they—after drinking long draughts from a jug of liquor that was produced, mounted their horses and spurred away through the course of the Cat-Gut, as if pursued by a hundred haunting demons.

On the following day the tri-weekly stage, or "bearse," as it was more frequently denominated tore down into the mining-camp of Skeleton Bend, with its fractious six-in-hand, and the veteran of the line, Grasshopper Joe, standing up—

right upon the seat, holding or rather guiding the rushing animals with his right hand, while with his left, or "handy" member, he flourished a short whip-stalk in such a manner that the long, braided buckskin lash tickled the ears of the leaders, spitefully.

Down grade, out of Billy-Goat Gulch, and across Dead Man's Flats into the thriving little mining town did the stage whirl, with noisy rumble, to come to a dead halt before the principal tavern, while Grasshopper cut a pigeon's wing on top of the stage, and his voice howled forth in stentorian accents:

"Hyar we be—Skeleton Bend! Pile out, pilgrims—ten minutes fer supper, an' fifteen fer whisky. Next station is Puke Center!"

And the passengers did pile out with a will—a full score in number, representing every phase of character usually found in mining-towns, from the stogy-booted miner to the portly speculator, dandified sport, or card-sharp.

At stage-time Skeleton Bend always presented a festive appearance, for it was the unfailing custom of the larger class of the inhabitants to gather at or in the neighborhood of the tavern, to watch Grasshopper Joe fetch the "hearse" into town, a-booming. Then, in addition to the fact that the "hearse" always brought a large tri-weekly mail, there was generally several arrivals of parties who had come to take a look at the "city," with a view to adopting it as a permanent abiding-place.

The Bend was quite a village of shanties and tents scattered about on the level sandy flats of the valley pocket, some of which boasted pretentiously of size and more than usually good finish, for those regions.

To be sure there was but one street, and that was only so called from the fact that the width of a couple of wagon-tracks had been left, and rows of shanties built on either side.

Along this street were located the business places of the town, consisting of the tavern, which bore the peculiar title of the "Bung-Hole," a combined grocery, drug, dry-goods and hardware store, and post-office; a Chinese gaming den; a blacksmithy; two more saloons and gaming-houses; a boarding-house; a strong cabin, used for a justice's office and jail; a Jew clothing or Cheap John establishment; McKoot's Gold Exchange Bank—all of the above being interspersed with shanties and shaft houses—for, despite Dead Man's Flats being a rich placer field, shafting had proven that the further down into the earth the mining was carried, the richer were the returns.

It was just about an hour before sunset when the "hearse" arrived in Skeleton Bend, and the labors of the day had been mostly suspended, while the laborers gathered at the "Bung-Hole" to see who and what were the arrivals.

Out of the whole load of passengers, there were only four persons that attracted more than ordinary notice—for the greater share of them were very rough and gruffy miners.

First among these might have been mentioned the tall, lean party, with iron-gray hair and mutton-chop whiskers, whose attire declared him to be a person of some wealth, if not importance.

His features were rather emaciated and fur-

rowed, and wore a deathly pallor, with the exception of his nose, which possessed a roseate tinge, the color commencing at the roots and deepening the nearer it approached to the end. His eyes, too, were fiery, and wore a cynical expression that was not pleasant to see.

His attire consisted of a suit of spotless white duck, with a white silk hat to match, a "b'iled" shirt, sporting an immaculate collar, tie, and a blazing diamond pin; and patent-leather shoes.

A gold-headed cane in hand, and a pair of gold-rimmed glasses bridged upon his nose only added the appearance of a nabob.

The second attractive party was a younger man, dressed in the same style, less the hat, shoes, cane and glasses—the hat he wore being one of the jaunty slouch order, the boots the prevailing style of top-boots worn by border-men, while neither cane he carried nor glasses he wore. A belt about his waist contained a single revolver, to warn observers that he was not unarmed.

In face he was a handsome man, with a handsome cut of features, long wavy hair, a pointed mustache, and eyes that were dark and of a fascinating, magnetic power. Of the two, he naturally attracted the most attention.

Third among the party was a long-geared specimen of Yankeedom, if ever there was one—a gaunt, hungry-looking individual, with a countenance of the typical "Our Uncle Sam," into which the concentrated essence of the raw country greenhorn was expressed. His hair was long and shaggy, and of a flaxen color, and a very thin goatee of the same hue ornamented his chin.

In the way of attire, he wore a pair of striped breeches, by several inches too short in the legs, as they came above his shoe-tops; a red velvet vest across which was strung an enormous watch-chain of pure brass; a calico shirt open at the throat—a swallow-tailed coat of the most antique pattern, buttoned tightly around his waist, and gave him an even "skinnier" appearance. His head was crowned by what had once, evidently, been a respectable-looking "plug" hat, but was now riddled with bullet-holes, and had the appearance of total collapse. A belt about the waist of this party contained a pair of horse-pistols of the largest size and caliber.

The fourth party referred to kept close in the wake of the third man, and was no less a person than the colored tragedian, Edwin Booth Snowbank, banjo and all.

And the worthy tragedian was the first of the human family, of his particular color, who had ever visited the Bend—consequently there was a decided sensation as he stepped from the stage, and murmurs of surprise from the crowd.

CHAPTER III.

DICK OF DEADWOOD PUTS IN AN APPEARANCE.

It so happened that Skeleton Bend was as well supplied with that class of humanity known as "toughs and tigers," as any other mining town of its size in the State or territories, and of this same fact the town at large was proud, for the majority of the inhabitants belonged to that same type.

The flower of the fierce and lawless flock answered to the title of "Graveyard George," from the fact that he had been the first to furnish a subject for the cemetery, at the Bend.

He was fat, squatty and greasy, in appearance, and his clothes were even greasier and more slouchy than his person. A villainous, hang-dog look was a habitual expression of his fiery countenance, and he possessed the head, the massive jaws, the fists, and the muscles of a prize-fighter.

Ever around and ready to engage in a row, was this "undertaker" of the Bend, as he had been facetiously named, and no sooner did he set eyes upon the dusky form of Edwin Booth Snowbank, than he spat upon his hands, appreciatively, and cut a pigeon's wing, in the street.

"Yip! lip! hurroo!" he roared loudly as he intercepted and stood precisely in front of the tragedian. "Looker hyar, boys, what d'ye call this heer movin' panorama o' Egypt? Tell me what it is, an' I'll sell ye a half-interest."

"Why, Graveyard, that's a nigger—a reg'lar sorgum-molasses 'coon from Georgia, I tell yel" one of the miners declared, whereat the miners all laughed.

"Yas, cuss me ef it ain't a reg'lar size black-an'-tan—a thoroughbred black walnut," the ruffian cried, half-squatting, with his hands upon his knees, and leering up into Snowbank's face. "Hello! I say, you thundercloud, whar'd ye spring from?—what'll you take fer your complexion?—whar'd ye b'y the ulster?"

"Jes' you git out ob dis yar chile's way, or I'll awful quick show you," Ned asserted pompously. "Don' ye go ter nosin' 'bout me, you white nigger, or I'll paralyze you in two wiggles ob a lam's tooth. Oh! I's a bad nigger to do anything wid, sah! I carry's a toothpick, I does."

And from out of the sleeve of his duster a common-sized carving-knife slipped into the tragedian's hand, and he made a sweep at the bully of the Bend.

But for a sudden backward movement of that individual, which precipitated him to the earth, he would have received a carving across the countenance in reality, for the son of the South was dead in earnest.

This little act was a sufficient guarantee that there would be a scene right there and then, and some of the bystanders applauded.

Graveyard George arose to his feet with an oath, his face flaming with rage.

"See hyar, you black imp of Satan, did you intend to cut me then?" he roared, but keeping out of range of the knife.

"Hope me die ef dem wa'n't dis yer chile's perzact calculations," Ned declared, importantly. "I tole you to gwuff me, you didn't gwuff—so I reach for you with my stilletter. That's de kind ob a two-legged ha'rpun I is. Carve you ebbery time you cum near me. 'Spect you don't know me, eh?"

"No, you infernal nigger, ner I don't keer ter form yer acquaintance; I allus selects my company—any o' the b'yees 'll tell ye that."

"Den I'll tell you plain dat you doesn't want to s'lect dis yar chile. I'se a bad man, I is—I'se Edwin Booth Snowbank, de colored tragedian—

de nobles' Roman ob dem all—de triumphant Hamlet ob de age, d'rect from de Fifth Abbenue Theater, New York."

Another laugh from the crowd, who had surged *en masse*, near as possible, to the scene. All those who had arrived on the stage, also stood near, drinking in the scene eagerly.

Graveyard George considered that his reputation was at stake, and he was resolved to "lay the nigger out," without delay.

"See here, you cuss, do you know what I'm going to do with you?" he cried, shaking his huge fists at the tragedian—"d'ye realize what I, Graveyard George, the boss o' this hyar camp, ar' goin' to do with you, fer yer insolence?"

"Bress youah life, no—habben't de least fjee, chile. Hope you isn't gwine to insult my genyess wid an offer ob a golden bokay?" Ned replied, innocently.

"Golden bo'quet! Haw! haw! Yes, I'll give ye a bo'quet, you black Friday son-of-a-Sebastian! I'll give ye a bonanza, I will, an' don't ye fergit it. Tell ye what I'm goin' to do, nigger. I'm just a-goin' to mop this hyar street with you!"

"Mop de street wid dis nobles' ob all de Siberians! Shohl! No, nebber!" Ned cried, tragically flourishing the knife. "Jes' you keep at a respectable distance, or I'll sp'ile ye—I'll ki-yarve ye, I will—I'll cut ye deep wid my razzor. Ye better not cum a-foolin' around dis yar chicken, for I'se a bad man, when I get my Hamlet up. I carries a toothpick!"

"Ba-a-ah!" bleated the bully, in imitation of a billy-goat. "D'ye think I'm afeard o' one little knife, you skunk? Why, I've swallowed a hundred sech playthings as them in my time."

"Bet a dollar dat's a lie," Ned declared, coolly. "Mebbe you'se swallowed sebberril ob dat size, too?" and out from his boot-leg he pulled the immense knife, which was about two feet long, and was his especial pride.

A shout of surprise and laughter went up from the crowd as the tragedian stoved this dangerous instrument at Graveyard, with a long-reaching thrust which caused the ruffian to leap back with an oath.

"Now, jest you cl'ar out!" Ned again ordered, "or I shave you wid dis razzor—dis yar Toledo blade w'ot Hamlet used to sling in his campaign against de Siberians. Keep away, now, chile—keep away—take—take car', now—don't want to get slit froo de wizzen."

Graveyard George rarely stopped for opposing weapons when he had a purpose in view, but somehow the great blade of the negro had no savory appearance, and he was not prepared to impale himself upon it, so he stood literally at bay.

"Curse me, ef I don't lay you out yet!" he gritted, his face positively hideous in its appearance. "If hands can't reach you, the lead-mines and powder-magazines furnish something that will."

And from his belt he whipped a pair of large-calibered six-shooters, that looked as if they had been used for deadly purposes before, and leveled them full at the colored tragedian, with a triumphant chuckle.

"Now I have ye, my nig. Say yer prayers, fer within the next jiffy I'm goin' to tumble

you into eternity!" he cried, cocking the weapons.

"Stop! shoot that colored man, and you die!" cried a stern, ringing voice.

None of the Benders was it who thus ordered, for none were there among them who cared to provoke the wrath of the bully undertaker of the town.

The speaker had stepped forward and placed the muzzle of a revolver against the side of George's head in a very peremptory manner.

And this man was the sportive individual, in white duck attire, slouch hat and top-boots, who had arrived on the stage—the handsome, cool appearing chap, the glance of whose eye was a sufficient guarantee that he was a man of steel, in every sense of the word.

"Who are you?" Graveyard George growled, fully realizing his peril and the fact that it behooved him not to be too demonstrative. "What the devil are you stickin' your nose inter my biz'ness fer?"

"I'll blamed quick show you if you exhibit any more of your braggadocio about here," the sport replied. "If it's my name you want, I am Deadwood Dick, at your service—Deadwood Dick, of Deadwood—Deadwood Dick, the combined road-agent, dead-shot, card-sharp, speculator, miner, sport, detective, gentleman, loafer and thoroughbred. That is about as good an illustration of who and what I am, as I am able to give you. When I strike a town like this, where one particular rough of your type of character pretends to make a specialty of bullyism, I generally interfere, and either conquer the aforesaid bully, or quarter him up into regular size and plant him."

Calm and unexcited was the man of note, while speaking; and he was a center of many glances; for even to Skeleton Bend had the fame of notorious Richard of Deadwood penetrated—brave, bold, gentlemanly Ned Harris, so many of whose years had been characterized by adventures of a wild and exciting nature.

Hard it was to strike any mining-town or camp, where there was not some person who knew him, or, mayhap, took sides against him.

None was there now, however, who seemed particularly desirous of tackling him, save it was the ruffian, and even his insolence moderated when he learned in whose power he was.

"Put up your tool, an' cry quits, an' I will," he growled. "I ain't anxious to peg off, yet, by a long shot; so you put up your tools, an' I'll close up."

"Yas, you better. Oh! you sucker—you clam-chewer! jes' wait till I get you outside, some dark night. Won't I slit you wid my razor, though! Waal, I reckon I'll jest amputate you, suah!"

And then, remembering that there was propriety in making himself scarce while Graveyard was in durance, the darky hurriedly resheathed his knives in his bootleg, and vanished into the "Howtel."

Deadwood Dick then put up his revolver, and Graveyard George walked away down the street without a word.

"Waal, durn me, ef that ain't the first time I ever see'd the undertaker thoroughly subdued," one bystander exclaimed, in surprise.

"Don't ye fool yersilf," a raw-boned Irishman vouchsafed. "Graveyard George is no brat to be pacified so easy. He's gone out to cogitate as to how is the best way to go at it, to put a damper on the chimney of this sport."

"All right, gentlemen; if he comes back in search of me, oblige me by informing him he will find me in the hotel, here," Dick said, composedly.

Then, tipping his hat gracefully, he turned and entered the great barn-like shanty which bore the appellation of the "Bung-Hole."

The interior was scarcely more inviting than the exterior—but then the tastes of the Benders did not run to fine buildings or fine dress.

There was a bar across one end of the apartment, and this and a few broken chairs and benches constituted the main part of the furniture visible, unless it was the glasses and decanters upon the shelves back of the counter.

The barkeeper, a huge red-whiskered fellow, was slinging out the drinks rapidly, and at the same time keeping an eye on the large register, where some of the new-comers were inscribing their names.

Deadwood Dick sauntered near, just as the gentleman with the white silk hat and gold-headed cane was appending his signature, but stood aloof until the toned party finished.

Red Roxy, the barkeeper, looked at the name signed, and nodded.

"Oh! you're from New York, eh? Just wait, your honor, till these human sponges get through absorbing my moisture of pure rye, and I'll attend to your wants."

"Be spry about it, then," the man from the metropolis said, coldly. "I am not used to accepting second-hand service; please remember that, hereafter. Either I must be served first or not at all."

"Oh! that's your lay-out, is it?" Roxy replied, grimly. "Waal, sir, I've run this bar five years, an' I kin tell ye it won't work heer—that nabobism o' yourn—no sir-ee! The boys aire white, an' they won't allow no one to say he is better nor they are."

"Then they'll have to learn that there is distinction between commonalty and aristocracy," the New Yorker said, loftily. "By the way, sir, I wish the best room the house affords, and my meals served in the room."

Red Roxy gave vent to a whistle of astonishment.

"The best room in the house, an' yer meals served in the room?" he echoed, in amazement.

"Exactly, sir."

"Waal, I'll be shot for a lunch fiend, ef you ain't the most conceited old mutton-head I ever saw. Why, old gent, ef the b'yees about town war ter heer what a mighty fine eyepinion ye've got o' yerself, they'd rotten-egg you at oncet. As for accommydations, ye kin hev a room, ef ye come down with the filthy, at once, but ef ye want any grub, ye've got ter eat along wi' the other boys. Thar ain't no splittin' up on account o' style or color at the Bung-Hole; a feller w'ot w'ars stogy boots is jes' as good as a feller thet w'ars patent-leathers, an' he w'ot's got dudads ain't no nearer he'ving than he w'ot ain't, so long as he w'ot ain't honestly promises to pay fer what drinks he gits!"

If the New Yorker "took to" this idea, he did not make it manifest, but threw down a ten-dollar note upon the bar.

"There. Apply that on my board," he said, briefly. "Now, I want to trouble you by making a few brief inquiries."

"Go ahead, Yorky; ef ye ax nothing personal, ye'll find me a regular town Directory."

"It is well. I will pay you well for your information, if it proves valuable to me. What I understand is, that there is a young miner in this town by the name of Fred Flash?"

"Waal, I s'pect not," Roxy replied, wiping an imaginary tear from his left eye. "Poor Flash is dead—crossed over the range, you see. Some o' the boys found him up in the Cat-Gut, hangin' to ther limb of a tree this mornin' 'arly, whar he'd bin slung up by sum unknown enemy. An' now his widdier, Miss Fanny, she be down at her shanty nearly distracted."

"Ah! poor child. How opportune that I have arrived at such a sad period, as I may be able to offer consolation!" the man from New York said with manifest solemnity.

But there was something unpleasant in his tone, and a strange glitter to his eye that did not escape the attention of Deadwood Dick, who was lounging near by; nor of Roxy, who was leaning upon the bar.

"Dunno 'bout *your* consolin' her," he said, with a queer smile. "I tell ye, my nabob, ye don't want ter go ter monkeyin' around Capt'in Fanny, as the boys call her, onless you've got a license, for she's a nice little gal, an' thar ain't none o' ther boys but what'll stand by her."

"A fig for that," the nabob said, snapping his fingers contemptuously. "Wealth is omnipotent, and if I choose, I can buy the whole town, girl and all."

And with this declaration he sauntered away.

As soon as he had left the bar, Dick stepped up and examined the register.

"Honorable Ira Maxfield, of N. Y., eh?" he commented, addressing Roxy. "A very high-toned scoundrel—not?"

"That's it, precisely," the barkeeper replied, with a nod. "I allus kin read a feller when I set my peepers on him, an' I booked that rooster fer a reg'lar villainous skinflint, you bet! Wonder what he wants of the Flashes?"

"Probably has some speculative scheme afoot," Dick replied. "Who are the Flashes you mention?"

"Well, Fred Flash w'ot got hung, was one o' the whitest an' most respected pilgrims in camp. He cum heer an' bought up a claim that no one else would have, an' went to diggin' on it all by hisself. About two weeks after he arrived, he married Captain Fanny, an' good-luck seemed to cum o' this, fer shortly after he struck rich sand, an' the Clipper Mine war a success. Since then Fred an' Fanny has lived together, apparently happy, an' the Clipper hes bin rollin' out the rock an' sand beautiful, till she stands w'ith half a million to-day, at least calkylation. Fred had refused big offers fer it, an' some think thet's ther reason why they found him wi' his neck in a noose."

"Humph. Did they bring his body here?"

"No. The boss buried it, as the wild animals had disfigured it,"

"Nobody is suspected of the job, then?"

"No, I reckon not, though it's mighty likely Cap Cutthroat and some of his outlaws had a finger in the pie. Goin' to register?"

"Well, I think I will. Didn't intend to stop over, but betwixt you and me, I opine the New Yorker has a villainous game afoot, and I'm going to take the liberty of watching it."

He took a pen, and wrote in a graceful business hand—

"Deadwood Dick, of Deadwood, D. T."

Red Roxy gave vent to an exclamation, as he saw the signature.

"What! *you* the famous outlaw?"

"No! I am a free man. Once I paid the penalty of a road-agent by hanging, and no man can rightfully molest me. Still, might is right here in the mines, and I am molested, whether I travel as citizen or outlaw—openly or in disguise. Therefore, I have decided to not attempt disguising my identity. To you I am Deadwood Dick, the ex-road-agent—to the world I am the same. I earned my freedom from the vengeance of the law by hanging; I mean to keep it, if I have to fight all my life. If any one dares attempt to disturb me, he is the man I shall at once freeze to, and one of us will encourage the grave-digger's business."

Red Roxy brought his hand down on the counter with a tremendous thump.

"Bully fer you!" he said, with enthusiasm. "You've got timber, you have, and can count on mine veriest friendship."

"And mine too, for verily Daniel was good to the lions, and with the will of the Almighty, they cheweth him not. But thunder! how Dan must hev felt! Ay! verily he must have trembled. But, my beloved brother, cannot I beg your attention for a moment?"

Deadwood Dick turned to behold in the speaker the long-geared Yankee who had arrived on that evening's stage.

CHAPTER IV.

MAXFIELD—YUBA.

"WELL, old pilgrim, if you've got anything particular to say, I presume it's your privilege to do so," Dick replied, smiling.

"Thanks, my brother. Surely I have seen thy benign and reverend countenance somewhere in my pilgrimage, but my mind forsaketh me as to the exact time and place. Allow me to introduce myself, sir—the Right Reverend Col. Yank Yuba, late of Yuba Dam, also a minister of the church of Israel. My dear brother, I was once an arrant sinner like yourself, but I became inspired with holy thoughts, and pulled at once out of my old sphere, to take up my clerical duties as a shepherd of some erring flock. By thunder, pard, *I had to pull*, for Nance—that's my wife—she gave me a cussed cowhiding, sech as no cow could stand. But, excuse my digression from the road of righteousness, for sometimes I get teetotally off the track. I have come here, dear brother, to establish a church—also an insurance agency. I represent the National Company of Kalamazoo—assets, twenty billion; liabilities, ten dollars. Reliable, safe, cheap. Let me insure your life, sir, and then induce you to join the church of Israel and become one of the Emanuel's band,"

"Guess not. Don't want to cheat you, Yuba, because you see I am liable to go up in a cloud of smoke 'most any time, bein's its known around town who I am."

"That's all the more reason why thou shouldst take out a policy, dear beloved brother, and make thy peace at once. For ten dollars will I insure thy life in the sum of ten thousand dollars, and for ten dollars more I'll make you one of the pillars of my church of Zion—yes, I will, by thunder and lightning!"

Both Dick and Roxy, the bartender, laughed, not so much at the words of the stranger, but because they thought him crazed, or "off." And then, his appearance was enough to arouse a smile from a stoic.

"I'm afeard you won't abide long in Skeleton Bend, pilgrim, ef them's your politics. Ther b'yees don't go a cent on doctrines, and it wasn't over a month ago they tucked a minister about your size, away in under a pine log, over yonder on the flats.

"You don't say!" Yuba gasped, in evident horror. "What a heathenish set of people for a poor disciple to tackle! But, then, they ain't no circumstance to my old woman, Nance, w'ot I left down at Yuba Dam—no, sir-ee! Why, pilgrims, ef ye could once see thet woman git on one o' her tantrums, ye'd say she was worse'n any two-legged wild-cat w'ot ever lived. Mad! why cuss my eyes—I mean bless my eyes, if she isn't unduly violent. Ah! here comes my body-servant, Sir E. B. Snowbank. Ah! Edwin, my dear colored brother, is it you? I was just telling the gentlemen, how I, a meek, docile man—a son of Israel, am afflicted with a virago wife—ah! um! such is fate!"

The darky, who had approached, nodded his head.

"Bress dis chile's soul an' body, ef he'd like to be in your boots. Rather would I be Hamlet a thousand times an' allus hab my Toledo blade w'it'm—my razzor—my noble Siberian toothpick. Why, sah, if dat old daisy ebber catches you, Yankee Doodle Yuba, you'se a dead nigger, jes' as sure's you'se born."

"Alas! it's all the same old story," the colonel sighed, putting on such a doleful expression, that Deadwood Dick laughed, outright. "The same sad sacrificial story, gents. She has sculpted me, she has choked—yes, she has even paralyzed me, and yet I live to tell the story. Verily my will to be a great and good man is strong, but when old Nance Yuba rises unchristianlike before my gaze, I feel a blamed sight more like cussin' than I do like prayin'."

"Hope me die ef ye won't feel de most like prayin', ef dat yar Nance ebber learns you'se hyar," the tragedian grinned. "'Spect she'll go through you till dar won't be de side ob a shadder left ob you. Tell you what, Marse Yank, you better lie low, an' put an additional thousand insurance on yer life in my name, fer Nance, she be a-skirmishin' along on de war-path sumwhere's 'twixt heer an' Yuba Dam, a-lookin' fer you, wid dat yar bull-hide whip."

"Then, verily I must die, and it may as well be here, as elsewhere. Gentlemen—noble disciples of Emanuel's army, I leave you now for a t'n. It may be soon that I will see you—it may be never, alas! n-ever!" And pretending

to wipe a tear from his eyes, Yank Yuba turned away, closely followed by the negro.

Shortly after, Deadwood Dick sought the room that had been assigned him, and turned in for the night, his mind busy with thoughts concerning those who arrived on the stage, that evening, and all of whom were destined to play parts in another wild western drama, in so many of which he had previously been cast as a character.

But, suspicious of villainy, he was determined to stay and see the thing through, if it cost him his life.

Capt'n—Miss—or Mrs. Fannie Flash stood by the table in the kitchen of her little shanty, on the following morning, making a very pretty picture, as, with her sleeves rolled up to her elbows, she washed and wiped what few dishes were used in a meal for one person, and that person herself.

A *petite* little lady was the "Captain," as she was called, at the Bend, with a graceful little form which seemed all life and animation when it moved. In face she was fresh and pretty, with merry, expressive eyes of brown, that seemingly had the power of penetrating where-soever they were directed; a pleasant, tempting mouth, and generally perfect cast of features, while a wealth of soft brown hair hung below her waist.

She was attired in a dainty pink wrapper, just short enough before to reveal a daintier pair of slippered feet, and wore no jewelry or other adornment. Such was Captain Fanny, who, though still young in years, had been twice married and twice divorced by death—for she was not yet twenty.

At the Bend she was considered a dangerous woman—women envied her, women shunned her—not because she was not respectable or well behaved, was this, but because she was an enigma—that was the whole answer to the thing.

She was fearless—perfectly able and disposed to go and come when and where it pleased her fancy, and ever on guard to take care of herself. She had shot, but not killed, several of the town roughs, for hinting darkly against her character. She had once rescued a horse-thief from the jail, and set him at liberty, because she took a notion—and then defied the whole town. For all, she was quiet, unobtrusive, fascinating.

The fact that she was fascinating was why the men avoided her. Said they who knew, she had the power of charming any one whomsoever it pleased her; once she cast her mysterious fascinating influence around a man, he must be a brute who could withstand her.

There were traces of tears about her eyes, which betrayed that she had been weeping, this morning, which might not have been wondered at, taking into consideration the death of poor Flash, so recently.

She had finished washing the last plate when a footstep caused her to look around, and she beheld a man standing in the doorway of her little kitchen—an utter stranger to her.

The man was the Honorable Ira Maxfield, from New York, scrupulously clad in nobby at-

fire, and looking the picture of a vain, purse-proud aristocrat.

"Ah! good-morning, my noble lady," he said, doffing his hat, politely. "It gives me pleasure to know you—for I believe I am addressing the charming Mrs. Flash, relict of the late lamented Frederic Flash."

"Sir! I do not know you," Fanny replied, coldly. "Your presence is an intrusion."

"Ah! right my dear girl—quite right; but it won't be, after you know who I am. Allow me to introduce myself to you—the Honorable Ira Maxfield from New York. Perhaps your late lamented husband may have mentioned me, as I am his step-father, by marriage."

"You Fred's step-father?" Fanny ejaculated, distrustfully. "I do not believe it, sir. He never told me he had a step-father!"

"Oh! I do not doubt that. Such a queer, retentive fellow the dear boy was—he never confided anything of account, even when younger. How well I should have liked to have seen the poor fellow, before his sudden death. But, then, it is opportune that I have arrived so soon after your husband's demise, to take control of his business—most opportune, indeed."

The "Captain" looked astonished.

"I don't understand you?" she ventured, interrogatively. "In what respect will you take charge of my husband's business?"

"As sole and absolute master!" the New Yorker replied, coolly. "You see, my dear, you being merely a relative by marriage, cannot hold the least interest in your husband's property."

"Humph! we shall see about that," Fanny replied, her anger beginning to show itself in the flash of her eyes. "I rather guess you have made a mistake, as to the ownership of the property of my late husband. As Fred Flash's wife, and only living heir—for he told me he had no other connection—I am the owner, by inheritance, of such earthly wealth as he left behind him. If it's your game to come here and attempt to get possession of what does not belong to you, you will do well to speak for your coffin—you mind it."

The Honorable Maxfield laughed sneeringly.

"Oh! I have heard little girls talk before," he retorted, sneeringly. "But my dear Mrs. Fanny, I trust, will not find it advisable to buck against me, as I am a hard pilgrim to buck against. I have money, and money without stint, and that will buy me friends and influence. A thousand dollars judiciously expended will make me so many friends that I can step right into control of the Clipper Mine, and the majority of the people will back me."

"Villain! scoundrel! do you dare to stand there and talk to me thus?" Fanny cried, indignantly. "Leave my house, sir—leave it, I command you. You are a villain—an unscrupulous knave, and if you dare to stick your nose in my business, I'll shoot you."

"Oh! call me all the pet names you like!" Maxfield replied, provokingly calm. "I love epithets when projected by a darling of a mouth like yours. As far as leaving your palatial abode, I shall do that whenever I feel disposed. I didn't come here to threaten, my dear, but to propose terms. I merely mentioned my power,

to illustrate the fact that I hold the game, to do just as I please with it. Either you must yield to my reasonable demands, or I shall compel you to."

"Oh, you will? Well, go on with your villainous game, and see which will have the most tricks when it is ended."

"Ah! my child, I see you still do not comprehend the true situation of affairs. Let me illustrate to you. There are whispers afloat in the town that you are queer—that is to say, not exactly what a thorough lady should be, you know. You have been rather wild, they say, and inclined to flirting, and so forth, and now it is hinted that you were tired of Flash, and bired him summarily disposed of. Of course these are yet only the comments of some of the citizens, but if they are not contradicted by a person of influence like myself, they will soon gain general circulation, and the first you know you will find your elf pointed out as a low woman and the murderer of Fred Flash. That is one thing for you to consider. Then there is another thing that has come to my notice. Before you married Flash you had a husband by the name of Trevelyn, who was supposed to have died of heart disease. But he did not die. He was chucked away in a grave by some of the miners, without coffin, and only lightly covered, and on coming to his senses, after a spell of inanimation, he dug out and still lives; so you see you are a bigamist as well as a murderer, and being such, have no claim on the Clipper Mine, which accordingly descends to the next nearest heir—myself! Ha! ha! you see I am bound to win anyhow; if not one way, then in some other. I hold you at my mercy, but as you will hereafter see, I am inclined to be merciful."

"Curses on such mercy as a villain of your stamp would offer!" Fanny cried, fiercely. "May Heaven protect me, for I never heard of such an out-and-out devilish schemer in all my life before."

"Oh! I am a great villain, no doubt, but I always win, I assure you. Nor will it avail you to scorn my mercy, for you will either have to accept it, and my terms, or go out to the gallows you are supposed to have sent your husband to. Listen: I am rich, good-looking, and a pleasant, kindly companion, when not riled. I have come here to speculate, and intend soon to own the town, literally. I am a single man, my wife having died, about a month ago, leaving me free to again seek a companion. You are young and comely, and suit my fancy; to a T. Become my wife, then, and I will make you a great lady—gratify your every whim and desire—hush these slanders against you, and give you money without stint. Refuse, and I will reverse the order of things—that is to say, I'll establish myself as proprietor of the Clipper Mine—I'll denounce you as the murderer of Fred Flash—I'll use every effort against you—I'll proclaim you a bigamist and a vile—"

"Stop!" Captain Fanny fairly screamed, with a suddenness that caused the New Yorker to leap out of his tracks. "Take back what you were about to say then, you villain, or, God giving me strength I will horsewhip you for the insult."

"Insult? Bah! don't try tragedy. You are

more fitted for *low* comedy. Ha! ha! do you see the point?" and Maxfield laughed, villainously. "Oh! I am not afraid of the chastisement, and will retract nothing. You are a murderess—a bigamist, and a low thing. Now then, Miss Pert, horsewhip me if you dare—if you dare, mind you."

"Well, I *dare*, and I'll bet you'll find it out," the girlish widow cried, and with the words she seized a long snaky-appearing bull-whip, which had been secreted behind a chimney board. Maxfield uttered an oath, for seeing no whip until now, he had supposed her to be "gassing" about it; but just about now he began to realize his mistake, for, ere he could dodge, Fanny gave him a cut about his rather superannuated legs, which elicited a howl of pain.

"I'll teach you how to fool around me, you villain," she cried, earnestly. "Take that! and that!"

And the stinging cuts she administered with the bull-whip—showed she was no novice in its use.

"Curse you! Stop! Stop!" Maxfield cried, in pain and rage. "What do you mean in thus striking a gentleman?"

"I'll show you what I mean!" Fanny replied, resolutely, striking him a blow in the face—that raised a welt. "You'll find that you can't insult the girls and women here in the mines with impunity, as you can the city people. Get out—be gone! I'll cut you to pieces, if you don't go, you vile whelp!"

Maxfield evidently thoroughly believed this, and backed quickly out of the house into the street—then turned and ran hastily toward the Bung-Hole, which was some hundred rods across the valley from Flash's shanty.

He calculated flight was this time the better part of valor; and would put an end to the matter.

But in even this he was mistaken; for, instead of stopping her chastisement, and confining it to the privacy of her own shanty, Captain Fanny had followed him into the street, and came on in hot pursuit.

A long-lashed stage-coach whip was now in her grasp, in place of the bull-whip, and crack! crack! it sounded, as the snake-like bucks'kin lash leaped through the air and bit the shanks of the fleeing New Yorker.

Of course, this animated scene attracted instant attention, and from every direction the Bendites swarmed to see the fun.

Straight to the Bung-Hole hotel did the plucky young woman pursue her man, until, with curses of rage, he got within the doorway of the place, where she could not reach him with a whip.

"Oh! you Jezebel—you wretch!" he fairly shrieked, as he rubbed his shins—his face of an apoplectic color. "I'll pay you for this, oh! you virago! You have taken all the skin off my lower limbs."

"Yes, and I'll take and skin you alive, too, if you don't take back those unmanly things you said of me a bit ago!" Fanny cried.

"Ah! lady, has this man been molesting you?" Deadwood Dick said, stepping forth from the crowd.

"Yes, the villain! He came here with the

intention of driving me from the Clipper Mine, claiming to be my husband's step-father. When he found that I wouldn't drive worth a cent, he commenced to abuse me by threatening me, calling me a murderess, a low, vile woman, and so forth. Having no defense except self-defense, I took the matter into my own hands and horsewhipped him. The next time he dares to show his face upon the street, I'll repeat the operation!"

"Oh! will you? *will* you?" Maxfield fairly yelled, so intense was his anger. "Oh! you girl, I'll 'tend to your case. I'll teach you to strike a gentleman, I will. Whip me again, will you? O-o-h! you Jezebel!" And he shook his clinched fist at her threateningly.

"Miss, you need have no further fear or trouble from this scoundrel, as I will attend to your wants in the way of answering insults. If you will lend me your whip, I will guarantee to give the metropolitan sneak a second thrashing on the spot."

"Oh! *you* will, will you?" Maxfield roared, walking out upon the street. "You dare to call me a sneak, sir, and a scoundrel. Oh! but you shall answer for this insult—answer in the way gentlemen settle such matters, too. You must fight me, sir. Do you hear me—*fight me!*"

"Of course I hear, and I never refuse to accept a challenge!" Deadwood Dick replied gracefully. "You having preferred the challenge, it becomes my pleasure to name the weapons. Gents, is not this so?"

And Dick addressed the crowd generally.

"Ay!" came the responsive shout. "Who challenges doesn't choose!"

"Then I would respectfully name the weapons for this occasion to be unhealthy hen fruit—that is rotten eggs!" Dick said with a broad grin.

CHAPTER V.

THE "LOUDEST" DUEL ON RECORD.

THE crowd uttered a ringing shout of approval.

Already they were in strong admiration and sympathy with the cool gent from Deadwood, who was always ready to side with the weaker party if that party was in the right.

And then, the idea of a rotten-egg duel was so extremely novel, and suggestive of a laugh, that the proposition was hailed with general approbation.

"That's ther ticket! Eggs fer weapons—who has got any genuine smellers?" a miner cried eagerly. "Eggs! eggs! who's got any ancient eggs?"

"Bill Murphy has got fifteen dozen!" a townsman announced. "I'll go fetch 'em!"

And away toward the grocery store the man dashed, in quest of the hen fruit.

"Stop! stop! I protest against this outrage!" Maxfield cried, in horror. "I am a gentleman—not a ruffian, to fight with things of a disgusting and offensive nature. Either you must use the regular dueling weapons, or I will not engage."

"We'll see about that, you villain," Captain Fanny cried, as she seized a pair of revolvers from Dick's belt, and cocking them, held them leveled at Maxfield's head. "This gentleman was kind enough to interfere in my behalf, and

you challenged him, which, by the regular dueling code, gave him the choice of weapons to be used. Now you would like to back out, like the coward you are, but you can't come it! You've got to do just as the gentleman here, wishes, or you'll get twelve bullets lodged in your thick skull. That's just what kind of a hair-pin I am—and my name is Mrs. Fanny Flash—otherwise Captain Fanny!"

Deadwood Dick gave a start, for until now he had been ignorant of whose cause he was espousing.

"Yes, my nobby pilgrim, the lady speaks the truth," he said, addressing Maxfield. "You've made your bed, and you've got to lay in it—you've got to take a dose of eggs, or a dose of cold lead, just whichever suits your fancy the most."

"Eggs! eggs! them's the terms!" shouted the crowd. "Either the New York chap has got to fight with eggs, or up he goes to the limb of a tree. Heer cums Pottsy, now, with the eggs."

The miner was seen hurrying up the street, with a basket upon his shoulder, which was filled with eggs.

No hen fruit of local manufacture were these eggs, for not a hen or chick was there known to exist within fifty miles of the camp. The eggs had to be shipped in from Denver, and when they came to hand two-thirds of them were sadly affected, to say the least.

The crowd cheered vociferously, and Honorable Mr. Maxfield looked very crestfallen, as Potts came up and deposited his unsavory burden in the street.

"Are these warranted unsound, pardner?" Dick asked, as the miner deposited the eggs.

"Waal, I'll allow—phew! smell of 'em, ef ye don't believe it," was the reply. "Murphy has bin cullin' out them ar' beauties fer a year past, an' can vouch fer their all bein' gay and festive."

"Good! Now, gents, this New York scoundrel who sails under the name of the Honorable Ira Maxfield, has been guilty of insulting a lady, and the lady, as I hear, one of your respected townswomen. Therefore I have taken it upon myself to espouse her cause by offering to horsewhip him. He fires up and challenges me to meet him in a duel, all of which I accept, and name eggs as the proper weapons, desiring to thoroughly instruct yonder scoundrel in the ways of wisdom without resorting to the old-time instruments of defense used by our forefathers. The terms are that the parties of this duel shall take their places in the center of the street here, twenty paces apart, and each having an equal number of eggs, will pelt each other until the eggs are exhausted, or one or the other cries 'enough!' And the first one who backs out or attempts to flunk or escape—he is to be taken by the crowd and hung to the nearest tree!"

"Hip! hip! hooray! Gentlemen, let me be chairman o' this committee," cried the man from Yuba Dam, suddenly putting in an appearance. "I am a minister of the gospel, and verily I may be of some comfort to him that shall be stricken, in his departing moments. Then, oh, brothers of Israel, I am likewise an insurance agent, and, cuss my eyes ef I don't

insure the protection of this pretty gal, while the great Deadwood Dick pastes New Yorky all over with rare old perfume."

And promptly beside Captain Fanny the insurance man planted himself, a huge pair of revolvers in his grasp.

Edwin Booth Snowbank stood not far away, his eyes rolling comically, and a broad grin upon his face.

"Hope me die ef dis yar nigger wouldn't like to see de old woman sail in on de lan'scape, jes' about now! Go 'way off, chile. How she would s'prise dat dar Yuba! Bet youh life dat she'd paralyze him—she'd skin 'im alive."

"Take your place thirty paces away down in the center of the street, Ira Maxfield," Fanny ordered. "Obey, or I'll lame you!"

Maxfield did obey, and paced off the distance down the street.

He was no fool, this New York sharper, but on the contrary was keen as glass, and understood full as well when he was at a disadvantage as when he had gained a point or two.

Deadwood Dick also took his position, and then the miner, Potts, counted out the eggs in two equal piles, and carried Maxfield's share to him in the basket.

"Now, then, gentlemen, before this sanguinary strife begins, let me implore you to cast your thoughts from things earthly, and seek your Master to forgive you!" cried Colonel Yuba in a loud voice. "It's a matter of uncertainty in which clime you are going to land, and it's well to be prepared, cuss my eyes ef it ain't! So, ef either o' you pilgrims don't know how to pray, I am prepared to do jobs of that kind with promptness and dispatch, and on reasonable charges, the price depending somewhat upon the length of the prayers and its eloquence. For instance, I can do a regular *bona-fide*, first-class offering of half an hour's duration for ten dollars, in advance—dog cheap, bet yer life! The regular price is twenty-five, but where two birds can be hit with one stone, I always make a discount. Think of it—when in all your lives did you have so profitable a job done you, at so cheap a price? Then, too, let me insure your lives in the sum of ten thousand dollars—another small item of ten dollars cost to you. Verily, gents, it will pay you to let me do something for you."

"Better tackle the New Yorker. He will need consolation before he swallows all this hen fruit," Deadwood Dick suggested, with a light laugh.

"Ah! yes! exactly. My dear beloved brother, somewhere upon the tablets of the church of Israel have I seen your name enshrined," Yuba cried, advancing toward the capitalist. "Let me then do something for you, ere you are suddenly called away to the sphere where there are two climates for two varieties of souls."

"You get back out of the way, or I will cast an egg at you!" the capitalist cried, fiercely.

"Yes, dar, you chile, Yankee Doodle Yuba, you jes' come right straight foremost back, for I sw'ar to goodness ef you ebber gits any ob dat omelette splattered on your pusson, you can't sleep no more wid dis chile—for suah!" Ned cried.

"I'd advise that the whole crowd retire to the sides of the street, and give us the center," Dick said, "for eggs are difficult things to throw, and some one standing near might get an egg intended for the sharp, yonder. Get ready, Yorky, and when you hear three counted, let 'em slide!"

Maxfield nodded.

He was pale with rage, and had already armed himself with a handful of the fruit, ready for use.

Dick did the same.

"Now, then, all is ready," he said. "Colonel Yuba, will you count one, two, three?"

"Will I? Waal, I opine I will!" the man from Yuba Dam replied. "Verily he has no heart who can refuse to accommodate."

All became silence.

The crowd had retreated to the side of the street, as much as possible, to get out of reach of the eggs. The very fact that they were pronounced "unwell," was enough to cause every party except those concerned in the duel, to beat a hasty retreat out of range of the afore-said weapons.

Colonel Yuba pulled off his coat, rolled up his sleeves, unloosened his belt a notch—then cried:

"One! Two! THREE!"

It was the signal for the beginning of the novel duel.

No sooner was the word "three" fairly out of the minister's mouth, than Deadwood Dick dextrously hurled one of the eggs at the New Yorker; the latter was scarcely an instant later in following suit.

Smash! Dick's missile struck the Honorable Ira square between the eyes, and the unsavory contents were scattered liberally over his countenance.

By dint of expert dodging, Dick of Deadwood escaped the egg hurled at him, and it passed on, and spent its force against the side of Graveyard George's head.

Roars and shrieks of laughter escaped the crowd of spectators.

Such sport as this had ne'er before been witnessed in the town of Skeleton Bend, and its ludicrous character "tickled" every one, down to the oldest inhabitant.

"Time!" shouted Yuba, fairly dancing with delight. "Verily, the brethren do finely. Give the Yorker a chance to wipe off his bazzoo, you Richard of Deadwood—then proceed with your funeral."

"How do you like it, New York?" Fanny Flash called out, triumphantly. "Getting your pay in advance, ain't you?"

"Curses on you!" the capitalist shouted, savagely. "You shall pay for this! For every egg that strikes me, I'll cut short one year of your miserable existence—mark that!"

"Oh! you will, eh?" Dick cried. "I have appointed myself guardian of the lady, sir, for a time, and any grudges you have against her, you can settle with me. Ready, now."

The next instant Maxfield got an "old resider" fair in his mouth, which he had opened to hurl back some reply, and the crowd fairly made the earth tremble with their shrieks of laughter and derision.

"Bress de life of dis yar child, if dis amn't de wu'st eggsageration ob de true instincts ob low comedy dat I ebber saw. How old Shakespeer would sigh to see his noble ideas ob dueling thusly discomflooerated! Verily, there is nebber a hope for Hamlet in dis yar town—but, oh! goodness! dar is a big openin' hyar for Dock Bandis, Berry Mitchel and Count Johannes!"

Maxfield spat the filthy mess from his mouth, amid frightful curses; then, seeming stung to desperate madness, he seized a handful of the sickly smelling eggs, and commenced to hurl them with all the rapidity he could muster.

Not to be beaten at his own game, Dick followed his opponent's example to the letter, and the way the eggs flew through the air was lively, to say the least.

And two things there were, most wonderful to relate—one was, that never an egg left the hands of the ex-road-agent but what hit the capitalist—the other was, that hurl his missiles as dextrously as was in his power, Maxfield could not succeed in hitting his man, for, with all the triumphant and agile moves of a professional base-ballist, did Deadwood's dashing representative dodge the eggs, until every egg of either party was exhausted without his getting "a flizzard."

But, in the appearance of Maxfield, there was a change indeed.

From head to foot was he stuccoed with the loathsome substance of the eggs—indeed a more horrible plight for a man to be in was a thing to imagine.

"Guess you won't want any more omelet, will you?" Dick interrogated.

"On course he won't!" Yuba asseverated, grandiloquently. "A man w'ot's afeard to inure, orter be pasted all over jest as thet ornery skunk. Ef he had cum up like a man, he'd had pay for all this."

"I'll have my pay, yet!" Maxfield groaned, as he staggered away.

"All right! When you want it just walk right up to the captain's office and settle," Dick sent back.

The crowd began to disperse.

The battle was apparently at an end for the time being—and then, there was another and more powerful inducement to cause the spectators to seek another locality.

And no one with half a nose could reasonably ask why, for the sickening smell created by the breaking of the eggs was liberally distributed about the place where the duel had occurred.

And such a rare old smell had never struck the town since the earliest recollection of the oldest inhabitant.

"Come! this is not a good place for a lady," Dick said, approaching Fanny. "Allow me to see you to your home."

She readily accepted, at the same time giving him a glance of warmest admiration as she took his arm and they walked away.

The crowd paused to stare, for, undisputedly, they made a fine appearance. This man from Deadwood was the ideal of gallantry and grace when he chose to "put on the lugs."

Dick accompanied the "widder" as far as her shanty, and was about to leave her, when she interrupted him:

"You must not go yet," she said. "Come into the house. I would like to speak with you."

Of course he obeyed. It would have been a breach of etiquette to have refused—and then—

Somehow the bright eyes that gazed so fearlessly and winningly into his own, had the effect to inspire him with admiration for their fair owner.

Within the shanty, they both became seated—Captain Fanny in the doorway, and Dick in the center of the apartment.

"Now I will tell you what I want," the widow said, thoughtfully. "I wish to be advised what to do."

"Ah! you flatter me. You can perhaps find a better adviser than I."

"No! not if I was to search the mining country over. You are keen of perception, cool, brave, and above all, intelligent. All this I have studied out, in what little I have seen of you. Any one could safely take your opinion, and abide by it."

"I thank you for your good opinion of me, Mrs. Flash. If there is anything I can do for you, you need not hesitate to command me."

"And you need not fear that I am so bashful as not to do so," she replied, archly. "What I wished to say was, that I want to enlist you in my service as an adviser and defender. This man, Maxfield, has come here with the apparent intention to cheat me out of the mining interests that reverted to me at the death of my poor ill-fated husband. Perhaps he can do so, but he shall not succeed without a struggle on my part. If you will listen I will relate to you the precise substance of the interview to-day, which resulted in my taking to weapons defensive."

Dick acknowledged his readiness to give audience, and accordingly the pretty widow related all that transpired in the interview, as accurately as though she had made a memorandum of the proceedings.

Dick heard her through, his brows darkening at the recital.

"I had no idea that the fellow was half as bad a villain as that," he was fain to confess, "or I'd have never let him off with a simple installment of eggs. He evidently has had this little thing all planned out some time, and by Jove! it looks just as if he might have been concerned in the untimely lynching of your husband."

"Indeed, it does seem strange that he should happen here, unintentionally, so soon after my husband's death," Fanny replied. "Ah, sir! matters look darker now to me than they ever did before."

"Take courage, and do not despair, my dear lady. If this New Yorker double discounts me, he will have his hands full. I'm a sort of a guardian angel, you see, and I make it my business to fight on the side of the weak and unprotected."

"But you have not yet told me your name; which, indeed, is scarcely strange, as we have had no introduction."

"My name is a notorious one," was the reply. "One you may have heard before—Deadwood Dick, of Deadwood."

"What? the great outlaw?"

"Not an outlaw now, though once I was," the young man replied.

"Then I have heard of you. Do you remember of being captured one night by Indians, several years ago, and left bound and helpless on the prairie, while a great sea of fire swept adown the plains toward you?"

"I do not think I ever forgot a thing that happened to me, from infancy, up. But why do you ask?"

"Because, when the flames were not a mile off, two riders dashed up, set you free, and then swept on. You hurled your thanks after them, and plunged away to escape the fire."

"And my rescuers were—"

"My husband and myself. I thought I recognized your features when I first saw you to-day, for I remembered the wild, handsome expression upon your face on that particular night; it impressed me with a feeling of admiration, even though I loved only my husband."

"Then I must doubly thank you now, for which I had no time to do then," Dick said, warmly. "I would be more than an ingrate, not to offer you all the assistance in my power. As you say, there is a dark outlook—one which seems to point to the fact that Maxfield may possibly win, as he has money to purchase friends and influence. But, I have a little of the filthy lucre myself, and I can make it warm for him. But, how is it about this first husband of yours? Do you believe what Maxfield said, in regard to his being alive?"

"Oh, sir! I scarcely know whether to believe it or not. If he still lives, then there must be such a thing as returning to life after death, for he died—everybody knows that, here in the Bend. God forbid, if it is true that he has come back!"

"Ah! then you were not on pleasant terms?"

"No. He was ugly—brutal and unmanly. He often used to beat me, at no provocation at all, and I never knew a peaceful hour while I was married to him: for he seemed to take an unholy delight in tormenting me, and devising the most exquisite torture for my accommodation. You cannot wonder, then, that I felt relieved when he died."

"No. But this fellow may possibly be alive, which would be a bad thing in the start, as you would not be legally Mrs. Flash, and that fact would make it impossible to hold the mines on heir title."

They conversed a while longer, after which Dick took his departure and went back to the "Bung-Hole."

Within the bar-room of that theater of Bacchus, a scene was already drawn.

CHAPTER VI.

NANCE ON A PRANCE AND CAPTAIN FANNY'S DEFIANCE.

THE scene in question was rather an amusing one; indeed, when they did have a scene, at the Bend, it was generally of an "amusing" nature.

The bar-room was well filled with pilgrims of the various types of character that made up the camp's population, from the genteel citizen or

sharp, down to the veriest bullwhacker and ruffian.

Crouching in one corner was the combined minister and insurance man, Colonel Yuba, while in front of him stood a brawny, rawboned woman, with sharp, angular features, and mussy hair, a queer-looking party, with a positively ugly expression of countenance, a red nose, and toothless gums—a woman whose attire consisted of a pair of stogy shoes upon unstockinged feet, bloomers that reached to the ankles, a flaring red petticoat and green waist, and a corn-colored sky-scraper bonnet upon her head, gayly ornamented with loud ribbons and rosettes.

And this party stood in a tragic attitude before the cowering colonel, with an umbrella, or rather the literal skeleton of one—upraised threateningly in her grasp.

"Oh! I've got you, you skunk!" she vociferated, ferociously. "Ye needn't stand there a-winkin' an' a-blinkin', like as ef ye was afeard o' bein' skun alive. You know what ter expect, don't ye, you infarnal desateful old sun-of-a-gun. Oh! you viper! you critter—shall I peel the hide off'm you, right heer afore this crowd of gawpin' galoots? Shall I dissect you, I say, treacherous lizzard!—you lying rascally scape-grace—you miserable apology of a human man?"

"No! no! don't you tech me!" Yuba cried, pleadingly. "Don't you hit me, you old virago. Gentlemen, I appeal to you to take off this vicious old termagant—rescue a poor suffering pillar of the church of Israel from the clutches of a modern Philistine!"

"What! what! call me a virago and a termagant, will you?" the woman fairly shrieked, hitting Yuba a whack on the head with her umbrella. "Oh! Yank Yuba, I'll teach you that I'm your master, and that ye can't run over me. Oh! you son-of-a-gun! jest wait till I get you back to Yuba Dam—*won't* I tan your pelt fer you? *won't* I make you dance though! An' ye needn't appeal ter the crowd, neither—'twon't do no good, fer I'm old Nance Yuba from Yuba Dam, an' I can lick any pilgrim in the room, every day in the week, ef I am old and handsome."

This assertion elicited a loud laugh from the spectators. Altogether Skeleton Ben! was blossoming out into a first-class repository for queer characters.

"Oh! you needn't laff!" announced Elwin Booth Snowbank, from his perch on top of a barrel, where he was enjoying the scene, hugely. "Dat old rat-eater means bizness, you bet, now, an', bress you, she's as good's she looks, all de time. Yas, sah! An' w'en she let's inter Yankee Doodle Yuba, why, youh jes' orter see de fur fly! Oh! I tells youh she's a bad plum, is dat yer Nance!"

"Ned! Ned! verily I do believe thou art forsaking thy master and the church of Israel!" the colonel groaned, keeping a watchful eye upon the umbrella in the grasp of his confronter. "After all the holy teaching I have given you, caust thou see me suffer insult and abuse?"

"Spect, Mass'r Yank, I kin watch de ole ten-pin lam it to you wid more genuine composedness, dan dough she was raisin' dis yar chile!"

Ned replied, with a grin. "You see dar's a pile of differunce, too—you'se bin dar afore, an' has got a heap of knowlyedge about how it works, while dis yar chile is merely a novice. 'Spect a feller kin hab religyum, too, ef he don't mix up in quarrels wid de common white trash, an' git his skull dislocated; by golly yes! Feel mighty bad for you, Mass'r Yuba, but I can't help it—'deed I can't. Ef dis yar pusson was to attempt your rescue, dar'd be trouble, for suah, and jes' as like as not dar'd be gore spilt—gore! blood! coagulated crimson, an' dis yar chile w'u'd cut sunbody deep!"

"Shet up, you nigger!" Nance yelled, turning a wrathful glance upon him. "Ef you don't I'll come over there and swipe you one across the jaw, that'll make your teeth chatter."

"Bress dis yar chile, ef you'se eber cum near me, I'll cut you deep—I'll ki-yarve you wid a razor!" Ned cried, standing erect, and flourishing his huge butcher-knife about in a way that was rather dangerous to those standing in his immediate vicinity. "Better you keep off, now, I tole youh, or I—I—I stab you. I'se a bad chile, when I gets my Hamlet up, I is, an' I carries a six-by-ten toothpick in my bootleg—dis yar historical Toledor blade, w'ot I'se a-slingin' around, now!"

Mrs. Yuba glared a moment at the son of the South, as though she could annihilate him; then turned abruptly upon—not the victim of her intentions, for he had sloped!

The valiant Yuba had taken advantage of the diversion, to slip through a side door of the saloon, and make his escape.

A howl of rage came from the termagant, and brandishing her umbrella, she plunged after him, in hot pursuit, having caught a glimpse of his disappearing coat-tails.

"Oh! I'm after you, Yank Yuba!" she screeched. "Ye can't escape me, ye sneakin' villain—you desateful wretch! Jest wait 'til I git you cornered, you old puke, an' ef I don't snatch you bald-headed in less'n a holy seckont, then my name ain't Nance Yuba of Yuba Dam."

But the ill-tempered Nancy was not destined to catch the colonel, for his long legs were wonderfully bred with power of speed, and he dashed down the street and into a grove that bounded the northern side of the town, ere she had made a third of the distance.

She still kept on, however, evidently bent upon hunting up her recreant spouse, and wreaking summary vengeance upon him.

"Oh! glory hallelujeram! I shouldn't like to be dat yar Col'nel Yankee Doodle Yuba, ef dat Nance once more gits her flukes clamped onter his anatommy!" Snowbank cried, as he, with the crowd, watched the chase. "Oh! she's a reg'lar ole wildcat, suah's you lib, I tole you."

This ended the sport, and the crowd having become thirsty adjourned to the Bung-Hole to lubricate, much to the satisfaction of Red Roxy, who registered a silent vow never to turn away a queer character who had any evidence of fun in him, for it was always after having a little amusement that the "boys" became thirsty, and walked up to the "captain's office."

Three days passed, at Skeleton Bend—warm,

sunny days, when the sky was a deep blue, and old Sol's warm glances were counteracted by a pleasant breeze which blew down the valley, across the sandy flats.

The miners toiled away in their usual routine of labor—some in the golden sands upon the flats; others in the depths of underground mines, to which numerous shafts and slopes led the way.

During the above mentioned days Deadwood Dick lounged about the camp, visited the mines, and took matters easy, at the same time keeping a thorough outlook for his surroundings and maintaining a close watch of the movements of two men, namely—Honorable Ira Maxfield of New York, and the ruffian, Graveyard George.

Both had very much quieted down, neither noticing the young ex-chief.

Still it did not escape the understanding of Deadwood Dick, that there was an undercurrent gradually working against him—as it were, undermining him of what little foundation he had by his coolness and boldness earned.

Of course he knew that Maxfield and the mule-driver were at work. The New Yorker had money, and he was secretly buying up the roughs of the town by the liberal use of it.

Graveyard George, too, had a deal of influence among the average citizens, and it became apparent that he was using it in turning the minds of such people against this citizen from Deadwood.

Dick was too keen not to notice the covert scowls that the bolder of the roughs leveled at him, nor how they gathered in groups, and nodded, looked grim, and sometimes pointed toward him.

A storm was brewing, which sooner or later was destined to burst upon him in its full force—this was as good as an indorsed fact, and he had firmly concluded that he did not care how soon it came, for he was resolved if it came to a pitched battle, to make a hole in the population of Skeleton Bend, which would forever after be a warning to the citizens never to tackle a party from Deadwood.

He called occasionally upon the "widder," as she had been re-christened, and reported such news as he deemed advisable, or might be of interest to her.

The further their acquaintance progressed, the more Dick was forced to acknowledge a kindling admiration for her, for she had many noble traits of character; and then, the same fascination—the literal spell of enchantment that had attacked many a pilgrim who had formed her acquaintance, was gradually gaining a hold upon him. Not that he had forgotten or ceased to love the girl who had been faithful to him so long—Calamity Jane, whom he had left up at Leadville, while he came on into the Skeleton Bend districts, bent on finding and purchasing a mining-property on which to make a home for himself and her.

No; he had not ceased to think of her lovingly—but then—

He could not help admiring this fascinating Fanny Flash. That was the whole sum total of the matter.

The townspeople were very cognizant of his visits to the Flash shanty, as the people of every

small town are certain to be aware of other people's business better than their own, and, of course, there were remarks—not a few, but many.

And as might have been expected, they were of no complimentary nature.

Dick mentioned, or rather hinted at the fact to Captain Fanny, but her lip only curled in scorn.

"Let them talk," she said, angrily. "Talking never killed a person yet. It is none of their business if all the gentlemen in the town came to see me. I defy those who would slander me, and consider them beneath my notice. If you are seen to call on me, it is my business to receive or dismiss you."

That ended the matter, so far as Dick was concerned. He knew there was utterly no reason for remark, as his visits were purely of a business nature; and as long as there was no objection on the part of the "widder," it was proper for him to use and consult his own convenience.

About noon of the third day after the lively scene last recorded, Dick chanced to be passing the Flash shanty, when he saw Fanny standing in the doorway, motioning him to approach.

She was looking more charming than ever, attired in a pretty pink mull dress and her hair braided in two strands, school-girl fashion, down her back.

"Come in," she said, as Dick approached, "I have cooked a nice little dinner expressly for ourselves, and you must dine with me."

"Do you think it would be best?" Dick asked, a little doubtfully—"especially since there is talk?"

Then, just as he spoke came the thought what would Calamity say, were she to see him dining with another woman, and that woman pronounced a dangerous one—for a few kindly-disposed miners had already hinted to him the fact of Fanny's conquest power.

"Best, of course it will be best," Fanny said. "If I want you to dine with me is it anybody's business? I should say not. Besides, I have decided you are the man to superintend the Clipper Mine."

Accordingly Dick yielded, although it was secretly with reluctance.

A pleasant dinner, and a good one, it proved to be.

The Captain was an excellent cook, and then she was a fascinating conversationalist, two very valuable requisitions to a pleasant meal.

When they had finished, she said:

"Here is a paper which I have drawn up, and want you to post up at the entrance to the Clipper shaft. It will give those who read it to understand that you have a perfect right to visit me."

Dick received the paper with some curiosity, and glanced it over.

The contents occupied a page of foolscap, and was pen-printed, as follows:

"NOTICE:

"TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN—Notice is hereby duly given, that I, Fanny Flash, SOLE PROPRIETRESS of the Clipper Mine, have this day appointed Deadwood Dick, of Deadwood, my sole agent, and superintendent of my business interests.

As a firm, we will contract to furnish ready-made collars for those who mind our business better than they do their own. Signed:

"FANNY FLASH, The 'Widder.'"

"There! post that in a conspicuous place, and consider yourself engaged in my employ at a salary of two hundred dollars a month," the young woman said.

CHAPTER VII.

CUTTHROAT REAPPEARS.

THAT evening the tri-weekly stage rolled along across Dead Man's Flat, into the town, laden down, as usual, with passengers of every nationality, nearly, and all types of character were represented in the crowd of both sexes that disembarked from the old "hearse," but, that was not a remarkable coincidence, for hardly two of a kind was there to be found among all of the inhabitants of Skeleton Bend.

Among those arriving, the goolly share were miners—rough, uncouth fellows, all ready and equipped for working in the mines; but then, there were also the usual sprinkling of women and a few well-dressed men—these latter might safely be classed either speculators, sharps, or sports.

Among them was a dark-browed fellow, with eyes to match, swarthy complexion, and a long, black mustache—thick set and villainous looking in the extreme, and well provided with belt weapons.

He left the "hearse" and entered the hotel, with a swagger, and approaching the bar, ordered whisky, which the obliging Red Roxy set forth.

It so chanced that the Honorable Ira Maxfield had stepped up "to lubricate his tarrotle valves" at this same juncture, and in raising the glasses to their lips, the two men turned nearly facing each other, and their eyes met.

The result was simultaneous—the glasses dropped from their hands to the floor, and exclamations of incredulity escaped the stranger and the capitalist.

"Well, by thunder! How are you, old man?" the former cried, putting out his hand. "I hadn't the least idea your old shell was held together by earthly ties."

"But you now realize your mistake," Maxfield replied, with a chuckle. "But, Milton, my son, you are looking well and hearty. Getting rich, I dare say?"

"Devilish rich!" the other replied, sarcastically. "Haven't put by a thousand since I came West. All I could get went for sundries. Have a bonanza laid out now, however, which promises large returns."

"Ah! is that so? I am glad to hear it. Let's take something at our leisure."

They retired to a table in a deserted part of the room and became seated, after which Maxfield ordered a bottle of wine and cigars.

"Now tell me of your good fortune," he said, eagerly. "It pleases me to know that you have some fair prospects."

"The pleasure thereat being heightened by the hope that you may be able to get a smell," Milton replied, sarcastically. "Don't mind telling you, however, that I'm figuring after a certain

little stake known as the Clipper mine—with a widow at the end of it."

"The devil! Why, I'm working to gain possession of that same property!" the New Yorker declared, excitedly.

"So I heard, and that's perzactly what induced me to meander down this way," the other retorted, gruffly. "You've got to drop your aspirations in favor of me."

"Get out!" the capitalist cried. "Don't I already own the mine? Fred Flash was my stepson, and having no other heir the mine descends to me."

"Humph! we'll see about that. I'd awfully hate to carve my own father, who gave me such a good start in the world a few years since, on the toe of his boot; but, business is business, and I must have a piece out of the mine, or bang goes your shanty into teetotal collapse. That's just the kind of a hair-fastener I am!"

"But, my dear boy, listen to reason," the New Yorker said, persuasively. "Right is right, and cash makes right. Let me induce you to withdraw your claim in favor of mine; money is no object to me—the mine is, for with it I intend to rake in the widow. Betwixt you and me, too, it was through my clever planning that Flash got his head into the noose. Not a word of this outside, now, for it would go against me, and if the widow *should* ever get note of it, all of love's young dream would vanish."

Milt Maxfield laughed loudly.

"You cussed old whelp!" he said, coolly. "I'll be shot if you ain't the cheekiest dad a feller ever had. Seems to me your cheek petrifies more and more, the older you grow. That's pretty good of you—that pun about love's young dream—ha! ha! Reminds me of elysium dreamlets and rotten eggs. Ha! ha! I heard about your getting mutilated by that pilgrim Dick, of Deadwood. Guess there's not much hope for you as far as the widow is concerned, and as for your putting Flash out of time, I happen to know that's a lie, because I was the Judge Lynch that officiated on that little occasion myself!"

"What! what! You tell me this?"

"I have that honor. No offense because you wanted to steal a little of another man's thunder, however; but, you see, I happened to have the ventilator key to that little lie."

"Well, let that pass, then," Maxfield said rather sheepishly. "Now, you say you intend to have a piece out of this Clipper Mine, eh?"

"Most assuredly, yes. I shouldn't hev went to any trouble had I not an object in view. I intend to have a big piece, too."

"Humph! That's easy enough to say, but, in the next place, how are you going to get it?"

"Oh! I'm going to marry the widder, to start with, and get possession of the property afterward."

"Oh! you are! Maybe you'll get her, and then, again, maybe you won't. She gave me a public cowliding, and then got a young ruffian to paste me over with rotten eggs, all because I proposed to her."

Milt Maxfield laughed uproariously.

"I should have liked to witness that cir-

cus," he said. "No wonder, you old fool, that she mitted you. You've neither youth, fascination, nor beauty, like your dutiful son."

"But I have the rocks," the elder Maxfield chuckled, "the greenbacks—the glittering coins. Ha! ha! Youth and beauty pales before such opposition—eh? But, come—come! Fill up your glass. We cannot afford to be at swords' points, and must amicably arrange this matter."

They tossed off a couple of glasses of wine apiece, and then lit cigars.

"Now, then, to business," the capitalist resumed. "What kind of occupation have you been in since you've been sojourning here in the hills, my son?"

"Well, various styles, and patterns dark, I should say," was the answer. "Sometimes a miner, sometimes gambling, sometimes disinflating highway conveyances and footsore pilgrims. Under this latter professional calling, I have been successful in achieving some fame under the handle of Captain Cutthroat."

"Ah! a road-agent, eh? Then, you are in league with the fellow they call Deadwood Dick, eh?"

"I opine not. I run my own shop. Besides, this Deadwood Dick is a deserter of the profession, and below an honest road agent's notice."

"Ha! ha! pretty good. Now, my boy, I see that you are not at all troubled with scruples, and so I am going to talk turkey to you. Which would you rather have as a choice—the widder or the mine?"

"Both of 'em," Captain Cutthroat replied, sententiously. "I ain't no hog; I know when I ain't got enough."

"On the contrary, you are very porkishly inclined. You had better come to liberal terms, or you'll get none at all."

"Bah! How will you hinder me?"

"Very easily. Money is power, and power is might. By slinging out a few ten-dollar notes, I could hire you drummed out of the camp—or your throat cut, for instance."

The younger Maxfield gave vent to a prolonged whistle.

"Well! I'm blamed if you ain't the coolest old cuss I've met in a long time. But, you seem to forget that I am Captain Cutthroat, and a particularly bad man to deal with."

"It matters not; I do not intend to quarrel with you. I'd rather buy you. What will you sell yourself for?"

"Well, now, I reckon your talk business. How much will you give me, spot down, for my interest in the widder and in the mine?"

"I'll give you a hundred dollars to go in snucks with me and get the mine. The girl we will also get in our possession; you can have her and a quarter interest in the mine; I'll take the other three-quarters for my trouble."

"Agreed! Dish out your plans, and if palatable I'll digest them."

The older villain took occasion to turn his head one side and cough, and at the same time smile. It was a crafty, villainous smile of satisfaction, which did not reach the notice of Cutthroat.

"I'll tell you what my plans are," he said,

pouring out another glass of wine. "In the first place this chap, Deadwood Dick, who has assumed protection of the girl, must be got out of the way. He is entirely too sharp and dangerous an individual to buck against, and if he can be fixed so that he will be short of his wind, it will be a great item in our favor."

"Leave him to me. He is precisely the kind of a pilgrim I'd like to make wilt," Cutthroat said, boastfully. "I've planted many a worse customer than he."

"Well, don't be rash. You may get snagged yourself. He's got the reputation of being a bad person to handle, and you don't want to go careless by any means. If I were you, I'd get a shield. For instance, there's a rough in town here, whom they call Graveyard George, who has a grudge against the chap from Deadwood. Get him interested, and manage so that if anybody gets carved it will be him."

"Pretty good idea, that's a fact; but then, I've a better one, which I'll put into execution, if I cannot mow down the galoot without. What else?"

"Well, after the ex-road-agent is out of the way, we'll try on the girl. She being evidently under age, it can be made to appear that she is in need of a guardian, and I can get an appointment in that line, I guess. If we fail to persuade her, then—or if I should fail in that plan, I'll prove that her first husband is alive, which makes her a bigamist, and consequently not an heir to the property of the late Fred Flash. You can then spirit her off into the mountains, and I, being the only relative of Flash, will take possession of the mine in our mutual interests. That will be the cloud the end of which is tipped with gold for us—ha! ha! yes, and no insignificant sum, either, for the Clipper Mine is a catch, mind you."

"Yes, and of all the villains I ever encountered, you are certainly the most villainous. The plan cannot help but work, if you speed out your ducats. But, something just struck me as a little queer, my royal dad. You who occupied such a mighty financial and social position in the East, should suddenly change your base to the West. Little singular isn't it? Had to go West, eh?"

Maxfield, senior, grew pale, and glanced nervously around him.

"Oh! how dare you think, much less utter such a thing? You know I never could be guilty of such a misdemeanor as would make it necessary for me to skip. You may go, now, lest we attract attention, and, mind you, don't let it escape that we are in any way related, as it might ruin our prospects, you see."

Cutthroat nodded, and arising mingled with the crowd that swarmed about the bar, eager to wash down the dust of their journey.

It so happened that Deadwood Dick sauntered into the "Bung-Hole" at this juncture, and took a seat in one of the lounging chairs near the door, to enjoy a cigar, while he thought of Calamity Jane, his betrothed, whom he had left up in the Leadville country—blithe, faithful Calamity, in whose merry composition there was so little to merit the ominous name she bore, except to those who incurred her wrath.

But a few minutes, however, was the ex-

prince to be left unmolested, for soon into the saloon the ruffian, Graveyard George came tumbling, "half seas over," and evidently ripe for a quarrel.

Dick being the first he came to, was of course the first to catch his attention, and he stopped directly in front.

"Hillo!" he grunted, with a savage leer. "So et's you, is it? Tho't I told you ter git out o' th's hyar town."

"Oh! did you?" Dick replied, carelessly. "If you did, I really must have forgotten it."

"Well, ye know it now, durn yer picture; so git!"

"What for? I'm very comfortable, here."

"Yas—I see you aire. But it ain't comfortable fer me to see ye around this hyar town, an' so I want ye to climb out. I'm boss o' ther camp, an' my name is Graveyard George, 'cause I killed the first pilgrim ter delicate ther new cemetery, down yonder on Dead Man's Flats, an' when I order 'em, they got to pass or I turn a trump. So git, now, for I mean business."

"If that's the case, you and I may as well settle," and Dick arose to his feet.

A miner stood near and he addressed him:

"Who is the chief magistrate, or who has the governing power in this town?"

"S'pect John Schmidt has," was the reply—"leastwise he is justice, mayor, chief of regulation, an' common council, all in one. That's him—the pussy Dutchman."

Dick caught Schmidt's eye, and motioned him to approach, which he did.

"Vel, vat you vant?" he queried, surveying the man from Deadwood, critically.

"I want to know if you have a hearse and coffin near at hand?" the sport replied.

"Yas, I dink so," Schmidt answered. "Vot for?"

"Because if you have, you'd either better be getting them in readiness, or else put this man, Graveyard George, out of my reach, for if he doesn't proceed immediately to mind his business, I shall give the town of Skeleton Bend a chance to put on craps!"

CHAPTER VIII.

A STREET SPECTACLE.

GRAVEYARD GEORGE seemed rather dazed at the utterance, but Schmidt chuckled good-naturedly.

"Dot is all right," he declared. "Ef dot feller don'd vas let you somevat a good deal alone, yust you split him vid a cleaver."

"Mind—I warn you, if you do not remove him, I'll kill him," Dick said. "His life will be on your head, not mine, as I gave you notice to take him away."

"I don'd vas dake any of dot description," the worthy Schmidt said, making a wry face as he waddled toward the bar. "I dake nod-dinks but lager."

"On course he don't!" Graveyard bellowed, looking eminently ferocious—"ner thar ain't ary a galoot in this hyar camp as ain't afraid o' ther Undertaker."

"You lie there," Dick of Deadwood retorted. "I am not afraid of a dozen of your precise character and pattern. If you doubt it, and think it worth while to buck against me in your

insolent fashion, just waltz out here into the open air, and we will start a meat market without delay!"

And, following his words, which were audible in every part of the room, the man from Deadwood marched out of the "Bung-Hole" saloon, into the middle of the street.

With a fierce curse, Graveyard George followed; then the crowd came also.

Search the whole mining country over, and it is doubtful if more than twenty men out of every hundred, would not rather go without a good square meal, than miss a good street fight or quarrel.

Deadwood Dick took his position in the middle of the street, just opposite the door to the saloon—Graveyard George took his pose further down.

Evidently he was determined not to get too near, until he was sure of what the result was to be.

In five minutes the street was black with people, who flocked around, forming a sort of ring around the two men.

"Gentlemen!" now cried Dick, in ringing tones, "I came to this town to mind my own business, but I find that I am to have assistance. The loafer yonder with a cemetery bitched to his name, has ordered me out of the place and I refuse to go, whereat he shows fight. I requested your town magistrate to interfere, and correct the chap's behavior, whereat he refuses. If I engage in a quarrel with the aforesaid loafer, I shall kill him. Therefore, if any of you are interested in his welfare, please remove him while he yet gripes his wind. If you fail to comply with this reasonable request, I shall make an example of him for others to profit by. I am not disposed to pick a quarrel with him or with any one except on provocation—but I never was known to be drummed out of a town, except in return I acknowledged the favor in a way peculiar to myself. Furthermore, my hearers, there has come to my notice the fact that any little respect for my individual self that I may have created among you, is being undermined. I understand it all, and know to whom the cause can justly be assigned—the snob and scoundrel whom I egged, being the man; his loose cash being the servant that secures public disfavor to me. But, don't think for a moment that I care a cent's worth. If you as a people do not like my style, you needn't have it. Now, once more, is there any one sufficiently interested in the loafer to take him and put him where he will be of no more trouble—or shall I enlist in the little service?"

"Mebbe you'd better try it," Graveyard George growled. "Ef et be a dooel ye want, all you've got ter do is nominate your weapons, I tell yer."

The crowd was silent.

Evidently nobody was so greatly interested in the Undertaker as to care whether he "went over with his boots on," or not.

Dick saw this; knew that the general hope and opinion was that he would get "layed" by the town bully; saw the eager face of Ira Maxfield peering from the crowd; then became fired with a resolve to make good his promises, and defy the worst to come.

"We shall not need deadlier weapons than

our hands," he said coolly, turning to the Undertaker. "We will decide this thing in a rough and tumble scuffle, and the one who gets his neck broke can consider himself the vanquished. Get ready!" and he emphasized his declaration by throwing off his hat, coat and vest, and standing in his shirt and lower garments.

In this much, he pleased the crowd, for in no part of the world is a resolute man admired as much as in the West.

Graveyard George hesitated a minute, his right hand lurking in the neighborhood of his pistol-belt in a way that seemed to indicate that he had much rather settle the difference at a safe distance from the hard fists of the ex-road-agent.

"Come! come!" a voice cried, and the lanky figure of Col. Yank Yuba pushed forward, closely followed by his ebony companion. "No flunky business hyar, feller-citizens. Ef thet ar' Graveyard chap ain't a-goin' ter do ther fair wiggle in this heer leetle shake, he can't show no hand at all, by thunder! I'm a disciple uv ther Church of Israel, an' hev converted sum thirty or more of the Yuba Damites, but, cuss my boots, with all my religious principles, ef I will stand meekly by an' see shennanigun practiced—no sir-ee! I'll spill blood first!"

"Ay! blood! gore!—coagulated crimson!" Edwin Booth Snowbank cried, tragically; "we must diffuse its deep-hued currents, rather than that Hamlet, the noblest of all de Siberians, shall not be met with fair play! Plenipotentate dis yar chile's perluvial system, ef dem ain't de prime facts before dis yar court!"

"Come! pull off yer duds, an' perigrinate right up ter thet man from Deadwood, ef ye've got a smidge of heeroic marrer in yer backbone!" Yuba continued, addressing the ruffian. "None o' yer feelin' fer yer weepens, fer, ter pull one o' 'em will be ther means o' yer slippin' yer wind. Yes, sir-ee, my man—Yuba am I, of Yuba Dam, an' a minister of the Gospel, whose bizness it is ter inspire pious thoughts inter my flock o' two-legged lambs—but, by the thunderin' blazes! ef you don't come to time without enny o' yer slippery boots, cuss my old blind mule's left hind paw ef I don't bury religion in ther innermost corner o' my reverend stockin', an' fill yer carcass so full o' prepared plumbago, that ye'll fetch double yer worth for a solderin' block."

And to back his assertion, the reverend Colonel whipped out a pair of navy revolvers, the equals of which in size and uninviting aspect had never been seen at the Bend.

During all the talk Deadwood Dick had stood with folded arms calmly awaiting the issue, as unconcerned as though the crowd were his warmest friends, and his opponent a mere child with whom to contend.

"Yas, git down ter biz, you white pussons, or dis yar chile will afflict you with a recitation ob Hamlet, in de Shakespearean tongue. Yas, sah. I'se a bad man when I orate. I gets en-fired wid de spirit ob 'thusiasm. I raises my voice to sech a wextent dat de berry earf trembles wid de power ob my inspired eloquentiousness. Sometimes dis yar great tragedian hab been known to draw this yer large Toledor blade, in a moment ob enthusiasticness, an' wade

right into de populace, in quest ob gore intent, in de belief dat he was de ole man Hamlet hisself, in quest ob scallups—for suah, sah! So you better commence dis yar funeral at once, chil'ren, before I am tempted to spout a whirl-poolish torrent ob burnin' Shakespearean laver at ye."

"Yes, if the loafer has any intention of meeting me, he had better jerk off his raiment, and come at me, before I die of ennui!" Dick announced, laughing. "No weapons except our natural ones; the scrimmage to be rough-and-tumble, and the intention mutually to make the opponent's heels break his neck."

Graveyard George was loth to take a hand in such a scramble, with a man of Deadwood Dick's physical possibilities, and probably would have 'flunked,' had not he feared to inherit the contents of Yuba's tremendous revolvers.

He was at heart an arrant coward, and to "take water" now he rightly believed would be disastrous, and he therefore began to prepare for the fight, by stripping to the waist, and removing his rough feet covering.

Dick also removed his boots, but not his socks.

Then the two men face deach other, the Undertaker savage in aspect, the ex-road-agent, composed and defiant.

"That's the sermon fer ye!" Yuba of Yuba Dam cried, delightedly. "You both look like a reg'lar pair o' Philadelphia smashers—praised be the church of Israel! Thar was my old dad, Bill Yuba, used to be a bruiser, until he got a belt in the stummick what forever collapsed his balloon. Git ter work, now, boyees, fer ther crowd ar' anxiously awaitin', an' so am I! Verily, my fodder receptacle feels as if the good church of Israel had been on a long fast, and joy shall be mine when I can once more buy the staff of this life, wherewith to satisfy the cravings of a voracious appetite. But, until some pilgrim passes in his checks, and gives me a chance to make a few last sad remarks over his inanimate mud, am I destined not to hear the jingle of loose coin in my pocket, or experience the gratifying effects of a good square meal in the interior gentleman. Verily the servants of the good cause deserve such spiritual consolation as they get, as an off-set against such material consolation as they do not get."

"Bress youh life, Marse Yankee Doodle, ef dem ain't one ob de truefulest truefs w'ot you's expelled from your maxim-trap in seven ages ob cats!" E. B. Snowbank cried, in seeming sober earnestness. "De scarcety ob chuck hab bin so skeerce since I took you inter my employ, dat de enammul hab actually worn off'm dis yar tragedian's teeth fo' want of vitular gravitation—fact."

Further remarks were then and there for the instant suspended, for the two men now began to approach each other with a panther-like motion, when suddenly with a howl of rage Graveyard George bounded toward his enemy, like an infuriated beast bent on the instant destruction of its prey.

But in this instance the prey was too game to be destroyed so easily. A light bound aside, and Dick saw his antagonist lunge forward with outstretched arms; then turning as quick as a flash, he caught the ruffian by the throat and

left leg and with a strength only credited to a Samson, raised the burly body high above his head upon his hands, and held it there a moment, triumphantly!

The next instant he hurled the man to the ground with all his strength, and the wretch struck with a dull, sickening thud.

The blood gushed from his mouth, nose and ears; the fall had deprived him of his senses.

"There!" Deadwood Dick cried, glancing sternly around, his face slightly pale; "now, who is next on the list? Speak up, lively, for I want to settle any outstanding grudges there may be against me, while I've got my hand in. I gave this town an illustration of my metal not long ago, by rotten-egging a New York black-leg, and to-day I've had to give one of your fellows a lesson, consisting mainly of the fact that I'm the kind of a hairpin that always runs my own machine, and don't let out the job to a second party. Consequently, if there's any one anxious to test my capacity for fun, now's just the time to enter for the next race."

Some of the crowd tittered—others looked menacingly angry.

Graveyard George had not bulged an inch, and it looked as if he had participated in his last combat.

"Why don't you try to get in your work, now, Milt, my boy?" the elder Maxfield whispered to Cutthroat, near whom he stood. "There's a splendid opportunity for you to step in and kill him, and establish yourself as bully of the town—while at the same time you will be aiding our little scheme."

"Too splendid, entirely," the outlaw replied. "I am not fond of tackling small-sized earthquakes. I've a better idea of getting rid of the fellow. The ruffian yonder probably will not live, if he is not already dead. We will take charge of his carcass—or I will, and after he is dead we will have that sport arrested."

To which proposition the elder Maxfield chuckled, villainously.

"Good thought—good thought," he said, rubbing his hands together. "You are a chip from the parent block, Milt."

"Come!" Deadwood Dick again cried, inquiringly gazing around—"is there no one else's neck I can break? You have forced me to shut off the wind of one tough, by not clearing him out, and now I'd just as lief clear out the rest of the same class of characters, while I am at it. Don't all speak at once! Come out and see me one by one, and without bragging I'll agree to furnish Skeleton Bend with a better swept street than it ever had before. And that's the style of a hairpin I am!"

"And a hairpin, you, that any lady in any first-class town might like to wear—cuss my boots ef he ain't! But, gentlemen, let thy clerical servant humbly beseech you to pan out at once, if you are going to accommodate Richard of Deadwood, for verily I am getting anxious to examine the purse of yonder recumbent individual, to ascertain if the state of his finances be sufficiently large to expedite me in makin' a few professional remarks over his inanimate mud—and I will be very reasonable, arranging the length of my essay according to the length of his purse."

And the "preacher" from Yuba Dam, placed his hand upon his stomach in a mournful way, which made the crowd laugh.

But, although requested, no man stepped forth to accommodate Deadwood's representative citizen.

Too suggestive an illustration had he made with the undertaker for any person to crave like treatment.

Seeing that he was not likely to be pitched onto singly, Dick resumed his wearing apparel and left the crowd, going straight to the shanty of Fanny Flash.

He had that day made arrangements to board there, it being handy to the Clipper Mine, of which he had taken charge as superintendent; but he lodged in the shanty that covered the mouth of the shaft.

The charming little widow was busied with her household duties, and so Dick amused himself by glancing over a newspaper.

The crowd dispersed from the street, but he did not notice what had been done with Graveyard George.

He was well satisfied in his own mind that he had not killed the ruffian, and therefore was but little concerned about it.

Darkness had pretty well enveloped the mining-camp, and the stores and saloons were lighting up.

Fanny came in from the kitchen, bearing a lighted lamp, which she deposited upon the table where Dick was reading.

"You were in trouble to-night again, I see, Mr. Harris," she said pleasantly, standing just back of his chair. "I was afraid you would get hurt, and was nervous as a kitten, till I saw you throw the ruffian. Did you hurt him?"

"I imagine I jarred him a little, but am not sure," Dick said with his usual smile. "I guess he'll recover—a wiser man, I hope."

"You are very brave," the widow said, admiringly. "It is a wonder some pretty girl has not fallen in love with and married you—or maybe you have a love?"

"I am so fortunate as to possess the affections of such a desirable being, and am proud to acknowledge an earnest return of that affection," Dick replied. "And, too, I have been married several times, but Fate has as many times deprived me of the companion of my choice. Do you not think that a girl who could remain faithful to a man even though he marry and marry again, is worth prizing?"

"Ay—of course; but then a woman could afford to wait, if she had any hopes of getting such a man as you. Your fearless disposition suits me to a dot, and I do not care who in this town knows it. Do you know, Mr. Harris, that we are even now watched by prying eyes? Ha! ha! ha! if they look to learn, they shall find that Fanny Flash despises them for a set of sneaks, and hereby expresses her open defiance!"

The next instant, to the great astonishment of Deadwood Dick, she threw her arms about his neck, and imprinted a kiss upon his cheek, before he could help it or had the least idea of her intention.

She released him the next instant and burst into a merry laugh.

Dick turned to give expression to his astonish-

ment in words, and as he did so, he caught a glimpse of something that caused him to utter a faint cry.

In turning around toward the widow he faced a window which opened out into a vacant space beside the cabin. His eyes happened to fall upon the window, and closely pressed against the window-pane, he saw the unmistakable print of a human face and wildly staring eyes.

With the same instant the face disappeared from view.

Seizing his hat, and rising from his chair, he leaped through the open door of the shanty to the street, and dashed around the building to the vacant lot.

But no person could he see anywhere in that direction, in the dim gloaming of the evening. If any one had been at the side window to the shanty, that person had taken good care to get quickly from view in some mysterious way.

When Dick returned to the shanty, his face wore a sober expression.

"You were inconsiderate and rash in acting as you did, Mrs. Flash," he said, gravely. "At that moment a woman was gazing in upon the scene through that side window yonder."

"Pshaw! that's nothing. Two men were standing on the opposite side of the street, gazing in through the open doors. That's why I kissed you—I wanted to give them a little illustration of my independence and my defiance."

"But the act, if seen, will not add to your good reputation."

"Bah! They always suspected me, unjustly, because I was of a fearless disposition. I cannot change their opinion—do not care to gratify them enough. Who was the woman you say was gazing in at the window?"

"That woman was the only one now living whom I love—the only one who is ever liable to become my wife," Dick answered. "She has followed me here for some reason—and she has caught me in a very delicate position, as you are aware. Her name, or the cognomen she always goes under, is 'Calamity Jane.'"

CHAPTER IX.

A LITTLE GAME THAT WORKED.

AND so it was.

Dick had recognized her face in an instant as that of the famous Girl Sport, and hence his speedy exit from the shanty.

But as he could not find her, it at once occurred to him that she had seen the kissing act, and, filled with indignation and jealousy, had taken her flight—no one need guess where, for there were thousands of hiding-places in and about the prosperous town of Skeleton Bend.

Indeed, the act of the widow was such as might make any betrothed woman jealous, and for the life of him Dick could see no way of getting out of the very embarrassing position the widow had, by one intentionally harmless move, placed him in.

He saw that she was sorry, and did not chide her, but soon after left the shanty, and directed his footsteps toward the shanty at the mouth of the Clipper shaft.

It was but a rude, barn-like slab shanty; still Dick had rigged up the interior with a cot-bed and a couple of chairs, and it offered a dry

shelter to lodge under, and, moreover, the single door could be locked on the inside.

Arriving at the shanty, he entered, and lighted a lantern which was suspended from the rafters by a string; then sat down on the foot of his bed, and gazed thoughtfully down into the depths of the shaft, the round uncovered curb of which occupied the better portion of the center of the shanty.

"That was Calamity," he muttered, "and she saw the widow kiss me. Curse the luck! will she want any better proof of my faithlessness to her? No! this will be too great a blow to her, and her proud spirit will not stand it. I fear that I have looked upon her face for the last time."

He passed a sleepless night, his thoughts constantly with her whom the indiscreet act of the widow had undoubtedly offended.

Early in the morning he arose, and went to the Flash shanty for his breakfast, which was in waiting.

"Have you seen your lady-love, yet?" Fanny asked, as she poured out the coffee. "I am so sorry, now, that I did such a rash thing, last evening, as it may cause her many pangs of jealousy."

"No, I have not seen her, and naturally infer that I am not liable to, after what she saw last night," Dick replied. "She wouldn't need many such illustrations to satisfy her of my disloyalty."

"It is really too bad; I wouldn't have done it for the world, only I saw the man who claims to be poor Fred's step-father, standing across the street in company with another man, and knew they were trying to pry into my business, and I wanted to show them that I did not care a whit for their opinion," the widow declared. "But, take courage, Mr. Harris. As I have been the doer of wrong, I will be the undoer. I will hunt up this Calamity Jane, as you call her, and explain everything to her satisfaction, so that she can have not the least doubt of your affection for her."

"I'm afraid you'll find that a difficult task to accomplish," Dick replied. "Calamity is perhaps the queerest character to tame or coax, that you could find in all the Western mining country."

After finishing the morning repast he went back to the mine and set the men to work; then again left the mine, and strolled about the town, in hopes of catching a glimpse of Calamity, or of learning something of her whereabouts.

But she was nowhere to be seen—nowhere to be found, evidently, for nobody appeared to know anything about such a person. In all probability she had left the town as quietly as she came.

Skeleton Bend was a lively place during the day, as well as the night, and was, then, made still livelier by the peregrinations of the man Yuba Dam and his eccentric negro servant, hunted and pursued by the vengeful Mrs. Yuba, who always turned up just in time to miss catching the frisky minister.

And the way in which she promised to deal with the aforesaid Yank if she succeeded in capturing him, catered strongly to the risibilities of the citizens.

It was a long, anxious, unsatisfactory day to Deadwood Dick, and he was glad when it came night, for after partaking of his supper, he went directly to his rude lodgings in the shaft-house.

To his surprise, on arriving there, he beheld the lantern lit, and a man half reclining on the cot bed, engaged in smoking a pipe—a masked man too, attired in rough garments, top boots, and a slouch hat pulled down over his forehead to meet the mask.

And this individual nodded, as Dick paused and surveyed him sharply.

"Good-evening," he said, not offering to vacate his position, and his tone as free and easy as though his was no intrusion. "I found the premises unoccupied, and thought I'd wait till you arrived. Nice evening out of doors?"

"Very nice," Dick replied. "Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Well, yes, there is a little matter you can accommodate me in, and it was to arrange with you that I came here," the man replied. "You are Deadwood Dick, I believe—or am I mistaken in the man?"

"Not at all, sir; I am Deadwood Dick."

"I thought so. You see I don't often make mistakes. You are also boss of this hyar Clipper Mine, eh?"

"By direction of Mrs. Flash, I am superintendent. A notice posted outside the cabin will tell you that."

"Ah! exactly. I read it as I came in. Let me introduce you to myself—Deadwood Dick, you are most happy to make the acquaintance of Captain Cutthroat, professional road-agent."

"Humph! you are speaking a word for yourself, and two for me, I reckon," Dick replied. "In what way am I indebted for this interview, Mr. Road-Agent?"

"In the way of business. I will explain, if you like. I am an outlaw, and a terror in this region. I am reported to be a man who always removes every obstacle from his path, no matter how much money, or how many lives the removal involves. As you stand somewhat in the way of a little scheme of mine, I thought I'd drop in this evening and apprise you that you will save life and funeral expenses by making a hasty and final departure from this hyar town."

"Oh! is *that* so?" Deadwood Dick retorted with biting sarcasm. "Well, really, I admire your cheek, but find myself under the necessity of refusing your very tempting offer. I suppose you are innocent enough, as you may not have been aware of the style of pilgrim you were dishing your advice out to."

Cutthroat stared a moment—then uttered an oath.

"And do you mean to say for true that you won't leave the town?" he demanded.

"Precisely and exactly that same," was the calm answer. "I never yet saw but one man, who was so invincible that some other man could not happen along and lick blazes out of him."

"And who may this exception be, whom no other man can lick?" Cutthroat asked, half expecting what the answer would be.

"His name is Deadwood Dick, sir!"

"Oho! you mean yourself, eh? Well, if you've

got that opinion of yourself, you are liable to have to change it. I am not the kind of a man to stand long on words. You see, I want possession of this Clipper Mine, and I'm going to have it, and may possibly add in the widow. With you in the way, I might experience difficulty, and have therefore concluded to set you aside. The terms of your choice are simple—either you can take your leave, betwixt now and to-morrow night, or your earthly career will come to a sudden termination."

"I'll run all risks in that respect," Dick replied, drawing a pair of revolvers from his belt. "And, now that you have disclosed your business, I'll give you a cordial invitation to bounce—b-o-u-n-c-e, bounce!"

"And I'll acquiesce, in the best of grace, hoping to be able to attend your funeral soon," Cutthroat said, mockingly, as he arose and bowed himself out.

When he had gone, Dick locked the door, and prepared to retire.

"Another man anxious for the mine," he muttered. "I wonder what the ultimate result of this business will be, anyhow?"

Another day dawned upon the town of Skeleton Bend, bright and exceedingly hot.

Summer, with its feverish, burning heat, was getting fairly under way, now, and Old Sol was putting on radiant smiles with that flourish that makes the average pilgrim long for an iced sandwich.

After setting the men to work in the mines, Dick borrowed a rifle, and set out intent upon spending the day in the mountains—not so much that he anticipated capturing any game, in particular, but from a hope that he might somewhere in the dark ravines find Calamity Jane.

But he was destined not to leave the camp, as had been his intention.

Just opposite the "Bung-Hole" Hotel had he got, on his way, when he heard a sudden whiz, and the next instant felt a lasso tightening about him, and was jerked backward to the ground.

Ere he could arise, a score of men had surrounded him, and a crowd poured from the hotel, yelling and cheering.

Foremost among those who first surrounded him, was Ira Maxfield and his son, Milt—Captain Cutthroat; and it was the latter who had thrown the treacherous lasso, evidently, as he held the other end of it.

"Ha! ha! Stratagem can conquer more than kings, any day," the elder Maxfield cried, triumphantly, as several men hastened to secure the ex-road prince, by binding him hand and foot. "You see, we thought perhaps you might be a little unruly, my boy, and so took this simple means of securing your good will with your capture. Ha! ha! ha! secure him *sure*, boys, for he's as slippery as an eel."

"Gentlemen, what is the meaning of this treacherous act?" Deadwood Dick demanded, sternly. "If you have any reason for wishing to take me a prisoner, are you all cowards that you dare not face me and take me in a manly way, instead of lassoing me as you would a wild mustang?"

"Yas! that's it, by thunder! It was the

sneakin'est thing thet ever I see'd!" cried a voice, and Colonel Yank Yuba pushed forward upon the scene. "What's ther feller done, ennyhow?"

"None of your business, you long-gear'd Yank!" the elder Maxfield retorted. "You need not stick your nose in this business, or you may get it punched!"

"Blessed be Israel! who'll panch it, my very interesting friend—you?"

"N-n-o—that is, I never engage in fisticuffs, or soil my hands on persons of your ilk!"

"Aha! Ira Maxfield—that's pretty good of you—a pretty good lie, I mean. Verily, were I not an advocate of peace, I'd knock your smeller so much out of shape that folks would take it for a smashed bull-frog. And as for your never soiling yer hands, people out East know better than that!"

Maxfield turned gray with rage, but did not retort.

"I again ask to know the reason why I am taken a prisoner?" Dick asked. "I am not aware of any reason that should warrant this indignity."

"But you don't vas happen to know somedings about ebertytinks," the Bend's magistrate, John Schmidt, responded, swelling with importance. "You vas pen guilty off some murder, in der seekont unt a half degree, und you must pay der penalty mit der law."

"What! I guilty of murder? In what way, pray? Who have I killed?"

"You vas gone proke der neck mit one of der mosd respected citizens, an' dot ish so, unt now you must giff your neck ter pay for it. Der man, hish name was Graveyards."

"Oh! the ruffian, eh? I do not believe that he is dead!"

"Vat! Vat! you vas doud der word off der Schmidt families!" the Teuton cried, in a rage. "Py shiminy! I vas sentence you to pe shot, six, *sefen*, or *sa* times!"

"Yes, my dear friend from Deadwood, we have to make the sad announcement that Graveyard George passed in his checks at a cabin up in the mountains, but an hour ago," Maxfield, Sr., said, with sarcastic delight. "Of course, his demise resulted from the injuries he received at your hands, and you are responsible. Therefore, your arrest. Boys, you may take him to the jail. Mr. Schmidt, when do you think will be a proper time to try this criminal for his deed?"

"I dink ve gif him a trial shust at dark, ven de poys dey vas readty for to hear unt listen to de case!" the dignitary replied.

And so it was arranged.

Deadwood Dick was borne off to the town jail—for such an establishment the Bend did have, being a strong cabin purposely built to "jug" unruly pilgrims in.

The door was made of sheet iron, and the windows were heavily barred with upright strips of iron.

Many worse guarded jails might be found in larger towns than Skeleton Bend; Dick noted its strength as he was borne into it between four men.

The news, before night, had spread through-

out the town, concerning the arrest of Deadwood Dick, and elicited much attention.

People gathered in groups, out of doors, and in doors, to discuss matters. Some of the miners heard of the arrest and quit their work to join in the van.

Opinions were various—as various as were the types and character of people.

Some said it was wrong to arrest Deadwood Dick for ridding the place of a man who was feared and detested; others held the ex-road-agent answerable for the death of the ruffian; others still doubted if the Undertaker was even dead.

Nobody appeared to know what had become of the ruffian, and only the word of Maxfield and his son, who had given out his name as Bill Bartlett, and a mine named Green, was given to vouch for the bully's death.

The general opinion seemed divided as to the right of punishing the cool stranger from Deadwood.

Still, money was secretly at work, and a man with even ordinary perceptions could have seen that Maxfield's money, which was being circulated freely, was gaining him popularity; so that it was evident, that while there might be a few in favor of giving Dick his liberty, the majority would side with the Maxfields.

Fanny Flash heard of the arrest and set her little foot down upon her kitchen floor most emphatically.

"He shall not be hanged," she said. "I'll see to it myself."

She put on her jockey hat, and set forth into the street.

On her way to the store, that morning, she had noted the fact that curtains were up to the windows of a shanty, at the upper end of the street, which had not been tenanted for several months.

Straight to this shanty she now directed her footsteps, the resolute expression of her pretty mouth enhancing her beauty.

On reaching the shanty, she knocked promptly upon the door—then waited for an answer.

"I may be mistaken," she murmured, "but I do not believe I am."

No answer came—no stir audible within.

She knocked again—this time louder.

There came a sound, then, of something that sounded like a moan.

A frightened expression swept over Fanny's face.

"Maybe—maybe—"

She did not finish the sentence, dreading the omen of the words.

"I will see," she said. "Perhaps I can burst the door open."

She stepped off, gathered her full force, and hurled herself against it heavily, and—with a crack the inside fastenings gave way, and the door swung back into the room, leaving the way clear to enter the shanty.

CHAPTER X.

CALAMITY JANE HERSELF AGAIN.

AND she did enter.

There was but one room, and this was wholly unfurnished, and musty-smelling in the extreme.

Upon the floor lay a woman, stretched out at full length, with her face downward and pillow-ed in her folded arms.

Not a stir she made as Fanny entered, except by a quivering sob.

Quickly the widow closed the door behind her, and glided forward to kneel beside the recumbent form, and by the united strength of her arms, raised the woman to a half-sitting position.

The wilily beautiful face that met her gaze was stained with tears, and the eyes were filled with them, proving that this pretty, well-dressed girl had a sorrow.

"There! don't cry," Fanny said, pillowing her head against her breast. "I wouldn't if I were you. You have made a great mistake in supposing him faithless to you."

"What do you mean?" the weeping girl demanded, pushing her off, and arising to her feet. "What do you— Ah!"

She uttered a gasp as she looked fairly into the widow's face, and staggered back.

"You! you!" she articulated.

"Yes, I!" Fanny said, frankly. "Please do not condemn me until you know all. Are you Deadwood Dick's promised wife—the girl, Calamity Jane, of whom he speaks so fondly?"

The light in Calamity's eyes lessened a trifle of its sternness.

"Yes, I am Calamity," she replied, coldly.

"Once I was the betrothed of Deadwood Dick."

"Until you saw another woman kiss him, and grew wild with jealousy," Fanny suggested, inerrily. "Really, you are right, I suppose, but you do Deadwood Dick a wrong in believing him faithless. I am the one who is to blame. Do you want me to prove it?"

"I am not at all particular," the Girl Sport replied, frigidly. "I scarcely see how you can exonerate Mr. Harris sufficiently to satisfy my opinion."

She had wiped the tears from her eyes, now, and faced the pretty widow, more calm in demeanor, and looking gravely handsome.

"But, I can, though," Fanny said. "Now, just you come right down to my shanty, and if I cannot satisfy you in every particular, I'll take a pistol and shoot myself."

"Thank you—you need not go to that trouble," Calamity said. "I do not care to go there—"

"For fear you will meet Deadwood Dick," Fanny interrupted; "but you need not fear that. He is in jail and not likely to get out."

Calamity started, whitening.

"You are lying?" she said, incredulously.

"No, I am not," Fanny said, "Sit down, and let me tell you all."

She found a box and they sat down upon it, side by side.

Fanny then related all that had any particular bearing, how she had lost her husband—how Maxfield had villainously beset her—how Deadwood Dick had generously come to her rescue and protection, and in fact, everything, including the kissing affair, which she explained in the same way she had done to Dick. She also narrated how Dick had been arrested and thrown in durance, at the instigation of Ira Maxfield, and the uninviting prospect there was in store for him.

"And, now, are you not satisfied?" the little widow asked, as she wound up the narration.

"I have not decided. Perhaps you are telling the truth, and in that case, Dick is not to blame. I will, however, conquer the foolishness I have so recently been guilty of, and try to secure Deadwood Dick's release. You may go, now; I will see you again."

Fanny impulsively threw her arms about the girl's neck and kissed her; then turned and left the shanty.

After she had gone, Calamity stood several minutes, with her eyes riveted upon the floor, wrapt in deep thought.

"Either I have been unjust, or else I am a fool by listening to that woman," she said. "Loving Deadwood Dick as I do, I wonder that I can believe her, after what I saw. Still, I will try them! It will not take long for my sharp eyes to tell whether he is true, or faithless. Ha! ha! no. Sharp eyes are mine. But I must not tarry here. I will assume my old-time costume and take a hand. These dresses seem odd enough to me, and I would rather go back to my old style. Still, if I ever marry, I shall do so as a woman—not as a tomboy."

She had cheered up visibly since Fanny's narration, although a pitiful expression yet haunted her eyes and mouth, betokening how deeply she had taken the blow.

She was preparing to leave the shanty when a form darkened the doorway, and Captain Cutthroat doffed his hat pleasantly.

"Ah! excuse me, Mrs. Flash, but I have just come from the jail, and Deadwood Dick requested me to say to you that you must not be downhearted, as he has strong hopes of soon being reunited with you a free man!" he said bowing low.

"Sir!" Calamity exclaimed stepping back, a paler shade to her face; "you are mistaken, I am not Mrs. Flash, but Calamity Jane."

"Ah! I beg pardon for the intrusion, then," Cutthroat apologized gallantly. "I was told Mrs. Flash came here a few moments ago, and took you for her. But stop! Deadwood Dick mentioned you, I think—let me see? What was it he said?—oh! I have it, now. He asked me if I had heard of any woman in the place, called Calamity Jane."

"He did?"

"Yes, and seemed pleased when I told him no. Excuse me, lady—you have grown pale! Can it be possible that—that—why, hang it, that—you have any love for this tricky Deadwood pilgrim?"

"Any love?" Calamity gasped in a choking voice, as she staggered back against the wall, her face deathly pale. "N-no! no love. God help me—no love."

"Your words belie you," Cutthroat said in a kindly tone; "and your only too apparent anguish at heart arouses my sincere pity. Tell me, miss, were you ever betrothed to this man?"

"I was, yes," was the faint reply, "until I came here and saw that which caused me to believe he was faithless to me."

"Poor child. He has been faithless then, for his attentions to the widow have been remarked by every one. He is a rascal and a criminal,

and as his destined hangman, I shall take delight in knowing that I am avenging the wrongs of so fair a lady when I send him off."

A sudden change of expression swept over Calamity's face, and she eyed the man sharply, a color livening her cheek.

"You will hang him?" she interrogated.

"You bet I will do that same."

"And I bet you won't!" Calamity retorted.

"See here! Do you know what I think, sir?"

"No; I haven't the slightest idea, my dear lady."

"I'll tell you," Calamity said, coolly. "You have a grudge against Dick, and in some way learned of my jealousy of the widow Flash. So you came here, hoping to turn me against them. Bah! you villain—you have signally failed. Yonder is the door; make use of it by taking your departure."

"But, listen. You misconstrue my purpose," Cutthroat replied, affably. "Indeed it is of no interest to me, anything concerning you—only I sort of took pity on you."

"Another lie, which will avail you nothing," Calamity answered, coldly. "You cannot deceive me, so you need not try. The sooner you take your leave the less will be the liability of your getting hurt."

"Ha! ha!" Cutthroat laughed. "I like to hear you talk, and could listen to such lulling cooing all day long, did not business call me elsewhere. But your vim, and your poor opinion of me make me of a revengeful spirit, and before I go I must have just one kiss from your pretty mouth."

And with a bound he was by her side, and had thrown his arms about her.

"Help! help!" Calamity screamed, wildly; then she struggled violently with the ruffian, clawing and digging into his face with her hands and biting him.

But he persisted determinedly, in a vain attempt to pollute her lips with his kiss.

"Help! help!" Calamity screamed again. And this time it was heard, her call for assistance, as was evidenced by the sound of approaching footsteps, and the abrupt entrance of a person into the shanty.

With an oath, Cutthroat turned from her to meet the colored tragedian, Snowbank, with his huge knife in hand.

"Oho! what do I see?—what doth my Shakespearean optics behold?" he cried, with a flourish of the dangerous-looking blade. "Hamlet am I, de noblest ob all de Siberians—de sweet-scented Shakespearean slinger ob de sword. Say, you son ob a sea cook, w'at you been doin' yar?"

"The ruffian has insulted me by attempting to kiss me!" Calamity cried, indignantly. "If you will lend me a revolver, sir, I will teach him that Calamity Jane ain't a gal that every pilgrim can kiss!"

"Jes' don't you go do nuffin' ob de sort, Miss Calamity!" Ned replied. "Gib dis yar chile room to tackle de job! Oh! Hamlet, look down from Hamilton on de noble subject, an' watch wid what artistically graceful revolutions an' Venus-like motions dis yar cullud tragedian doth proceed ter massycre!"

Off came the coat of the son of the South in a

twinkling, and he began to rake his huge knife across the floor in a manner that was suggestive of the way the average housewife attempts to sharpen a knife on the stovepipe.

Cutthroat stood for a moment surveying the scene, scarcely knowing what to do, and by no means liking the dangerous look of matters.

For a wonder he was not armed, except for a dirk-knife in his belt, having just left his revolvers at a gun-shop to be cleaned, and the prospect in store for him was not encouraging.

"Come! youh bad dyspeptic—square yourself, for dis yar chile is comin' at you," Ned cried, sternly. "I'se a bad man, an' I carries dis yar Hameltonian Toleder blade jes' on purpose ter shave de sinfulness offen sech extemporaneous excruciators ob de nateral classic laws ob humanity, like you—I does, fo' suah!"

And Ned grasped his ponderous knife firmer, and spat on the back of his hand in a business-like manner.

"Stand off! don't dare to touch me!" Cutthroat growled: "The young woman has been lying to you, and I have not been insulting her at all. If you know when you are well off you will be speedy in getting out of this shanty!"

"Hopa dis yar chile goes straight an' dies ob de influendways ef he budgeth de fricassced fraction ob an inch, ontill he amputates one ob your phonographs—no, sah!" the irresistible Snowbank declared. "Missy C'lamity, if you will jes' stan' wid your back ag'inste de door, you'll jes' see de representative 'Hamlet' (b de age go froo dat heavy villain wuss'n a lobster goes froo de salad, an' escapes ag'in 'fore de salad am served up!"

With angry, flashing eyes, Calamity took a pistol from the darkey's belt, and took her position with her back against the door.

"For God's sake, will you let him butcher me?" the outlaw gasped, growing white with rage and fear.

"Dis yar chile don't agwine to do nuffin' ob de kind!" Ned cried, pompously. "He ain't no hullsale butcher, you ignorant fellow—only a gen'man, jes' as de lady insinuates, an' ebbery American born citizen ob dese yere Yewnited States is bound by ties ob honor to pectect an' avenge de insults ob de feminine gender. So dis yar chile is jes' a-goin' ter clip off de left ear from your cranium, an' let you go!"

"Cut off my ear, you infernal black rascal? I'll see you in Kingdom Come first!"

"G'ess not; you'll see youah own shadow dar, grinnin' at you in recomembrance!" Ned grinned. "Come now! be turnin' dat yar pumpkin face ob yours sideways, so dat dis yar carver can get a whack at dat sprout ob yours. 'Twon't take sca'cely de twinklin' ob a cat's tail—den you can go!"

With a growl of rage Cutthroat drew the knife from his belt, resolved to sell himself dearly, at all hazards.

"Curse you—I'll show you mighty quick whose ears you will cut off!" he growled.

Then he bounded forward with a lunge, expecting to catch the darky at a disadvantage, but in this he made a grand miscalculation.

When put to the test, the tragically inclined son of the South was every bit as good as he professed, evidently, for, swinging his enormous

knife quickly and dexterously, he brought its keen edge with wonderful accuracy down beside Cutthroat's head, completely shaving his left ear off close to the side of the face!

"Stan' off! Don' you disturb dis chile any more or he'll cut you deep," Ned cried. "I'se a bad Senator from Kalamazoo, I tole ye, an' I'll ki-yarve you wid my razzor if ye don' luff me be!"

But he had no need to tender the admonition, for Cutthroat had withdrawn from the battle as suddenly as he had entered it, and with his hand clasped to the earless portion of his head, from which the blood was oozing copiously, he pranced about the room at a tremendous and not particularly graceful hop, skip and jump.

"Ow! ow! ow!" he roared. "You have killed me! I am dying! help! help!"

"I guess you won't perish entirely," Calamity said, with her old hard sort of laugh. "Here! the door is open. Take a scoot now, and tell the boys you represent the compliments of Calamity Jane."

On seeing an opening Cutthroat made not an instant's delay in taking advantage of it, and away down the street he galloped at full tilt, howling at every bound.

Straight to the Bung-Hole establishment the stricken man went, and between curses and groans related the kind of treatment he had received at the hands of Calamity Jane's defender, the negro.

This added another bubble to the day's excitement which fairly boiled in the mining-camp, to use a figurative expression.

Calamity Jane made her appearance that night, just before the time for the trial of Deadwood Dick began—walked into the Bung-Hole, twirling a cane in her right hand, and sporting a small cigar between her teeth. She was attired in her famous sporting attire, and in her belt a pair of six-shooters.

Cutthroat had gone to bed, but the elder Maxfield was about, and no sooner did he spy the Girl Sport, than he stepped up to her, importantly.

"Just you look here, my girl in male attire!" he said, laying a detaining hand on her shoulder. "Are you the party who calls herself Calamity Jane?"

"You'll mighty quick find out, if you don't drop your feeler from my shoulder!" was the girl's retort, and the N. Y. capitalist made haste to do that very thing, not admiring the peculiar fire in her glance.

"But you haven't answered me!" he persisted.

"I *am* Calamity Jane, then, if you wish to know!"

"Ah! then you were concerned in the barbarous criminal act of cutting off a man's ear, I understand?"

"I held the door while the nigger did the slicing," was the sarcastic response. "The fellow tried to kiss me, but I guess he won't have as much lip for kissing hereafter. Maybe you would like to imitate his example,"—and, as she spoke the girl drew, cocked and presented her revolvers. "Just take a reef, old gent, if you don't want your skull perforated; and, mind you, if Deadwood Dick ain't cleared and

liberated to-night, you had better contract for your coffin, grave-stone, and ceremonies."

All day the tide of excited humanity surged in the street; but little work was done; everybody seemed in one way or the other interested in the fate of Deadwood Dick. The street of the town grew more and more crowded as the day progressed, and as the sun sunk within a couple of hours of setting, there was a black mass of hats and heads assembled in a vast throng around and near the jail, in which Dick was held a prisoner.

Ira Maxfield, accompanied by Cutthroat, whose head was bandaged up, left the Bung-Hole, and proceeded to the Flash cabin, at the door of which they were joined by John Schmidt, the justice and general town controller.

Fanny was seated at a table, paring some potatoes as they entered, without knocking, and she rose, her face flushing with indignation, at the boldness of the intrusion.

"Sir! How am I indebted for this intrusion?" she demanded, as the trio took seats near the door, without an invitation.

"Oh! ve don'd vas charge you nodinks for dis interview," Schmidt assured, facetiously. "You see, my dear young voomans, ve haf some leetle pits of pizness mit yous, und ve dake der present obbordunity off seddling it."

"I am not aware what business you can have with me," Fanny replied, coldly.

"No, I subbose not," Schmidt said. "But I makes dot guide blain to you right away, all de wile. You see, you haf lost Fred Flash, who pe gone deadt. Dot is right?"

"Unfortunately for me, my poor husband is reported to be dead," Fanny replied, gravely.

"Yaw! he vas deadt, unt ve all vas mourn his loss. His death leaves you his widow, don't it? Yaw! dot ish vot you diuks. But ve haff some funder proof ash dot. You haf got a first husband living. Vot you tink of dot?"

"I think it is an outrageous lie!" Fanny replied, candidly. "My first husband died, and was buried. It does not look reasonable that he could come to life again."

"Yet such vas der gase," Schmidt averred. "He vas not deadt—he vas simbly in some swoons ven you up an' haff him carted off mit der bone-yard. Pime-by he vakes up, mit himself, unt he finds ash how he don'd vas covered oop so deeper ash he might haf pen, unt so he digs out. He vas sick mit married life, unt so he goes off indo der upper mines for a six mondths deadt drunk. Ven he returns here, he finds ash how you vas married mit annoder mans, unt not vishing to make you some droubles, he goes off again for anoder drunken ash before."

"But, why are you telling me all of this?" Fanny said. "There must be some object back of it all."

"The only object, by dear Mrs. Flash, was to have you understand, from a legal source, that you had a husband living when you were wedded to Flash—consequent are a bigamist, and not a legal heiress to Flash's property!"

"Ah! I thought you had some scheme afoot. Well, sir, if you can prove that my first hus-

band is alive, I will surrender all claim to the Clipper Mine, and move out bag and baggage. But, until you do prove that to my satisfaction, I won't vamoose—nor would I take your words on oath."

"Vot? you don'd vas take dot wordt off der Shustice off der Peace?" Schmidt cried, offended.

"Bah! no," Fanny retorted. "I wouldn't trust a saint out in this country, except he was under watch."

"We can easily prove that he is alive, by producing him," the elder Maxfield said, "but it is not our intention to be severe with you, if you can be prevailed upon to do what's fair. We have got it in our power to take the Clipper Mine entirely away from you, as I am next of kin to Flash, you not being his legal wife. Also, you, I learn, are not of legal age, and being incompetent to take proper care of yourself and your affairs, you need a guardian, to look after your interest, and this the controller of the town has the right and power to appoint. Consequently, the honorable Mr. Schmidt confers on me the position of your guardian."

"Oh!" Fanny exclaimed. "Does he?"

Of such an open-handed case of villainy, fore-planned, she had never heard the equal.

"Yes," Maxfield, Sr., continued, blandly, "and so, being such, I propose to make you comfortable, on conditions—easy conditions. My son, here, has had the misfortune to lose his left ear, and is in a critical condition. He needs a nurse. I wish you to take charge of him, and I have no doubt, during your care of him, you will both fall in love with each other, and a union will be the ultimate result."

"Undoubtedly," Fanny replied, with stinging sarcasm. "I almost fancy I'm in love with your son already, he's such a beauty. Indeed, I think he'd do to dry and hang up in a drug store, to cut emetics from. But, most magnanimous though your terms have been, Ira Maxfield, I cannot quite see the point, and so you can direct your villainous schemes to better purpose; for you can't contrive to run my machine, nary a time. When you produce my first husband, alive and well, I will claim no further interest in the Clipper Mine. As for your assuming my guardianship, I have to inform you that I arrived at my legal majority, this morning at five o'clock, and am emphatically my own boss. And as for marrying your no-eared son, when I wish to marry a full-fledged baboon, I'll select one out of his native clime. Now, I have said—so go! get out! bounce! It is no use for you to resist. Stay here three minutes longer, and I'll call in my men from the mine, and have them boot you out of the house, and down the street."

"Yes, and I'll help the job along," a voice cried, and Calamity Jane sauntered into the shanty, leisurely, accompanied by Colonel Yank Yuba, his fiery-tempered better half, Nance, the everlasting and tragical E. Booth Snowbank, and a long red-whiskered miner. "Come! take the widow's advice, and vamoose, or thar'll be a bee here, that will illustrate how sin must knuckle!"

The trio of knaves saw that there was logic in the Girl Sport's words, and made haste to

adopt her advice by leaving the shanty, and marching back to the Bung-Hole, in a crest-fallen spirit.

Great preparations had been made for the trial of Deadwood Dick, for it was the first trial of any account that had ever been held at the Bend.

A grand stand, consisting of a platform made on top of a couple of empty flour barrels, and supplied with a chair and table, was supplied for the judge of the occasion, John Schmidt, who, as the hour approached for the trial, was gradually inflating with importance and lager beer.

Seats had also been arranged out of logs and stones and slabs, in front of the judge's stand, for those who were to take a hand in the ceremonies.

At prompt six o'clock—which time was announced by the blowing of the whistle at the Red-rock Mine—Deadwood Dick was led forth from the jail by two burly miners, and positioned in front of the judge's stand.

His impassive face betrayed no trace of alarm; indeed, the faint semblance of a cynical smile lurking at the corners of his mouth, would seem to indicate that he courted rather than feared the fate that was in store for him.

"Silence!" John Schmidt cried, climbing up to his lofty position. "Let der barties unt witnesses of de brosecution come forward unt pe seated."

Ira Maxfield and his son, and a miner took seats as directed.

"Now, if there pe any persons vot knows somedings apoud dismatter in favor off der prisoner, let dem sdep forward."

In answer to this call, there were six persons who came forward, *i. e.*: The two Yubas, now locked arms; the Shakespearean disciple, Snowbank! the widow, Fanny Flash, Calamity Jane, and the red-whiskered miner once before alluded to.

The eyes of Deadwood Dick and Calamity met in a glance that none but themselves, perhaps, could have interpreted; then the voice of the great Schmidt was heard again:

"Let der first barty off der brosecution rise mit his feet unt open de case!" he cried in the voice of a Stentor. "Waiter, *ein* lager, sir!"

The lager was forthcoming from the portals of the Bung-Hole in short order; to dispatch it was the matter of half a jiffy with the portly Schmidt.

Ira Maxfield arose from his seat and took off his hat in deference to the judge.

"If you please, your honor, I would like to offer that the prisoner at the bar is guilty of the crime of murder. It is well known to you all how he publicly engaged in a quarrel with one of your respected townsmen, and cast him upon the earth with all his strength. I took pity on the chap, and with Mr. Slink, one of my witnesses here, carried him to Slink's cabin in the mountains, where he has since died of his injuries. The man at the bar has long been a road-agent, ruffian and a terror to all honest people, and now that he has added another crime to his dark and evil list, does it not behoove us, as a people, to see that he receives a

merited punishment? I leave it to you, most noble judge, to decide, knowing well your honorable and just nature."

"Yah! you vas right. Waiter, *ein* lager. Next witness, take der stand."

Slink was the man to rise this time, and testified that he had been with Graveyard George at the time of his death, and had given him a decent burial.

Cutthroat then arose and confirmed the report, and prayed the court to pass a severe sentence upon the prisoner.

"Yah! dot pe shust vot I do, mit der greatest ob bleasure," Schmidt assured. "Ash der shudge and der shury ov dish hyar court, I do hereby sentence Deadwood Dick to be shot mit der heart vid rifles, sefen times, at sunrise, to-morrow."

"But, hold on here, old beer-keg!" Calamity Jane cried; "that ain't a-goin' ter work in this hyar court. I've got proof that Deadwood Dick is not guilty of what you say."

"You haff proof off dot?"

"Bet your sweet life, I have! Graveyard George ain't dead at all, but is over in the edge of the woods yonder, dead drunk from the effects of a bottle of old red-eye-rampage he's been guzzling. This little plot of the old black snake from New York is purely out of revengeful desire to get Deadwood Dick out of the way!"

"It's a liel it's a lie!" Ira Maxfield cried, in a rage.

"See heer, just you look out!" Calamity cried. "Better you let up on calling me a liar, if you don't want me to boot you clear out of town. Your race is up, anyhow, and the quieter you keep, the better it's going with you!"

"Yes, Ira Maxfield, the race of yourself and your son is up, emphatically," Colonel Yank Yuba cried, sternly, and the next moment there was a tableau.

Both Yuba, Nance and Snowbank had sprung forward, and before any one was aware of their purpose, had securely handcuffed the two Maxfields.

"Slop! slop! Vot for you dakes dem two men brisoners?" John Schmidt roared, pounding his table authoritatively. "Vot for you comes into my court, unt makes dish disturbances."

"In the name of the law," Yuba replied, coolly, having dropped all his former pious demeanor. "I will introduce myself to you, as Yankee Keen, detective of Chicago, and I have in my possession papers authorizing me to arrest one Ira Maxfield, formerly of New York, wherever I might find him, on the the charge of murdering his second wife some months ago. My two companions here, are also prominent members of the detective profession."

"Let me see dot order," Schmidt commanded. "I gan dell so quicger ash der tuyfel off you vas some humbugs."

Yuba *alias* Keen, took an official-looking document from his pocket, and handed it to the Dutchman, and he in turn bridged his spectacles upon his nose, and gave it a careful perusal.

"Dot ish all right," he said, presently, returning it. "You haff de right to dake Ira Max-

field. But how apoud dot veller vot haff his ear cut off?"

"I can speak for his arrest. The chap is a notorious outlaw," the red-bearded man said, rising. "You have all heard of him, as Captain Cutthroat, no doubt. He it was who lynched Fred Flash, in hopes of getting possession of the Clipper Mine."

"Who vas you, dot you know so many dings ash dot?" Schmidt demanded.

"I'll show you who," was the reply, and off came the red whiskers and hair, and a smooth-faced, brown-haired young man stood revealed.

The crowd gave vent to a shout of astonishment and Fanny Flash sprung to her feet, with a joyful cry, and was clasped in the stranger's embrace.

"Fred Flash!" Schmidt ejaculated.

"Yes, Fred Flash," the young man replied.

"You may wonder how I escaped being hung, and so I'll set your minds at ease. I was captured by some of this ruffian Cutthroat's men, and spirited away to a place known as the Cat-Gut. Here I was strung up by Cutthroat's orders, and left to make the best of my situation, while my executioners rode away. Fortunately for me, the noose was not placed properly about my neck, and I did not strangle, but hung by the neck for several hours, enduring excruciating torture, till this young lady, Calamity Jane, came along and rescued me. Resolved to have revenge upon my executioners, I decided not to be alive to the world, and so got some parties to give out notice of my death and burial. In the mean time, I traced out Cutthroat, and found him to be the son of Ira Maxfield, who had come here to the mines to get hold of my mine, if villainy and scheming could accomplish that object, and learned that the two were in league; so I lay low until some such a chance as the present arrived, giving me an opportunity to put in a word."

The crowd gave a cheer; Maxfield and Cutthroat were the picture of sublime rage.

"Vell, it vas all yust like a Sund'y school novel," Schmidt averred, "und I git so dry ash a fish, efery dime I hear of such dings; so I vill close dish hyar court, py sending der brisoners back mit der shail."

"But hold on! you have not given Deadwood Dick his liberty?" Calamity cried, anxiously.

"Und vot ish more, I don'd vas got some indendions off dot same kind," the judge replied. "Deadtwood Dick haff long been knowed undt feared ash an outlaw of der deepest dye-stuff, unt now vot ve cotch him ve shood him yust like a dog, und dot vill end all funder dispute in der matter. I leaf dot to der crowd, if dot don' vas der pest bolicy."

There was a second of silence; then came a great shout of approval, that seemed to issue from the whole assemblage, and fairly made the earth tremble.

It told the story straight enough, that the majority ruled, and that one man virtually controlled the majority.

"Dot settles him!" Schmidt said. "Poys, dake dot brisoner pack mit der shail, unt lock him up. In der mornin' he shall pass in his checks!"

The crowd cheered again, and Dick was hustled off to jail.

Yuba did not put his prisoners in the prison, but as soon as the stage came put them aboard of it, and with them and his two associate detectives was borne away, Eastward bound.

Calamity, at Fanny's urgent request, accompanied the Flashes to their shanty, where a literal council of war was inaugurated, to decide what was to be done in behalf of Deadwood Dick.

"If you can devise any means to effect his rescue, we will tender you all the assistance in our power," Fanny said.

"Don't fear that he will be shot, as long as I am around. I have already devised a plan. Can you bake bread?" was Calamity's query.

"Well, if I pride myself on one accomplishment more than another, it is on my bread-making," Fanny responded enthusiastically.

"Then, you mix the stuff for a loaf about as big as a dripping-pan, and I'll show you how I am going to get Deadwood Dick out of prison," Calamity said.

While Fanny hastened to obey the Girl Sport procured a small steel saw, a screw-driver, and a revolver from among some effects she had brought to the shanty in a sachel.

As soon as Fanny had the dough properly mixed, the revolver, a knife and the saw and screw-driver were wrapped into a compact bundle, and the dough covered over and around it, in loaf-shape, and put into the oven to lightly bake it.

"You are a genius," Fanny said. "I admire your pluck and nerve."

As soon as the bread was browned, Calamity put it into a basket, and added a knife, some butter, a piece of cake, and some cold meat.

Then, with the basket on her arm, the faithful girl made her way to the jail when it was dark, and the crowd of the day had for the most part adjourned to the saloon to "gargle" and discuss the things discussable.

A burly ruffian paced before the door of the lock-up, with a gun upon his shoulder, and he uttered a savage growl as he beheld Calamity.

"Well, what do you want?" he demanded, gruffly, unshouldering his gun, and holding it in readiness. "Get out of this, or I'll plug you."

"Better you try it, if you think best!" Calamity retorted, independently. "Bet a cookie I'll show you a trick you never saw before. I only come to give the prisoner some victuals—so, what you blowing about?"

"He don't want no victuals!"

"I know better!" Calamity replied. "He hasn't had anything to eat since he was first cooped up in here. Don't you like grub?"

"Waal, I opine!" was the laconic response.

"Of course you do!" Calamity agreed, "and so does every other pilgrim, so be half-way fair, now, and hand this chuck to Dick of Deadwood."

"You're tryin' to smuggle in some tools to him," was the next objection.

"Get out!" the girl laughed. "I wouldn't be as suspicious as you for a good deal. Here take the basket an' examine it, and then give it to him yourself."

The ruffian laid down his rifle, took the basket, and went through its contents, carefully.

"Don't see nothin' wrong," he finally said. "Guess there won't be no harm. Tell you what I'll do, gal; it's a very hot night, and I'm as dry as a fish; so jest you go get me a wee bit of a bottle of lickin', and I'll slip in the grub fer you."

"All right; it's a bargain;" and Calamity hurried hastily away only too glad of the chance that was now open to her.

At the Bung-Hole she procured a quart bottle of the worst red-eye; then hurried out into the night again.

"Now for liberty!" she said, joyfully. "The morphine that I got for my own use, this morning, will put the guard peacefully to sleep." And she slipped a powder into the bottle, and shook it well.

Arriving at the jail, she found that the guard had performed his agreement, and a grin of delight broke across his features as Calamity extended him the bottle.

"Ah! you're a jewel!" he said seizing it with avidity. "I'll make that 'ar bottle look vacant in a jiffy."

"I hope you may enjoy it," and Calamity withdrew out of hearing in the darkness, and waited—five, ten, twenty minutes in all.

At the expiration of that time she glided back to the jail.

The guard was stretched out before the door like a log.

She searched his pockets, found the keys, unlocked the door, entered, and found Deadwood Dick munching his food.

"Come!" she said; "the way is open. Will you go with me away from here?"

His reply was to take her in his arms and kiss her; then they left the jail and the town of Skeleton Bend behind.

A week later, in a quiet town miles northward, they were united in matrimony.

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BEADLE & ADAMS, Publishers,
98 William Street, New York.